APRIL 21, 2003

George McGovern on the War and the Reasons Why

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The Nation.

WHAT WE DO NOW:

A PEACE AGENDA

A FORUM with
DAVID CORTRIGHT, BILL FLETCHER JR.,
PHYLLIS BENNIS/JOHN CAVANAGH
and MEDEA BENJAMIN

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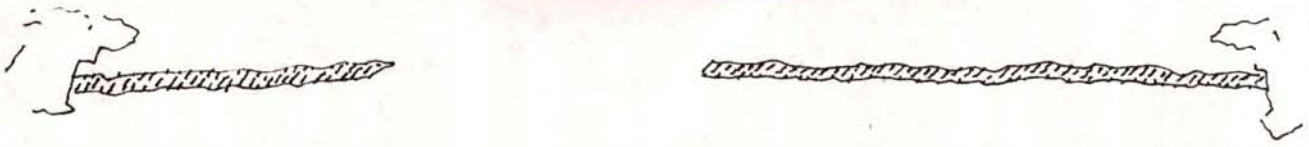
LETTERS



R. O. BLECHMAN

IRAN: THREAT OF A WIDER WAR

Needham, Mass.

■ In "A Triangle of Realpolitik: Iran, Iraq and the United States" [March 17], professor Mansour Farhang, a dissident who to my knowledge has not been to Iran for more than twenty years, presents a misleading account of where Iran stood vis-à-vis the looming US invasion of Iraq. Farhang's assertion that "Washington's determination to overthrow Saddam Hussein is most welcome in Teheran" simply has no foundation in fact, and the author himself amends it in the rest of the article.

As a political scientist (and author of "Iran's Foreign Policy After 11 September," in *Brown's Journal of World Affairs*, and of *After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy*) who travels to Iran frequently, I am convinced that the wheels of Iranian policy are fast turning against the US war, following the balance-of-power argument that the larger enemy of my enemy is my biggest enemy. Consequently, in view of Iran's national insecurity, fueled by the "Axis of Evil" doctrine, the Iranian opposition to the invasion is likely to get louder and louder as the war progresses. In fact, given Iranians' intense opposition to the invasion, an undeclared war by certain elements of the Iranian military against the Western invaders now looms on the horizon.

KAVEH L. AFRASIABI

FARHANG REPLIES

New York City

■ Regarding my unwanted separation from Iran, what point in my article is questionable because of it? Kaveh Afrasiabi seems to believe that his frequent travel to Iran gives him a more accurate view of what goes on there. If that is the case, Iran's diplomats who deny their government's violation of human rights are more credible than the contrary reports of Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch because their authors have rarely been given a visa to enter the country.

Recently, the tie between the Bush Administration and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution, the largest anti-Saddam Shiite group based in Iran, has been the subject of several news stories. The Council is one of the six exile Iraqi groups sharing the State Department's $92 million aid to anti-Saddam elements abroad. The leader of this organization, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim, has lived in Iran since 1980 and is a close associate of the Islamic Republic's top clerical leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Al-Hakim's armed forces, the *al-badr* brigade, are equipped and trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. About a month before the US attack on Iraq, Iran's security officials facilitated the border crossing of such prominent US-based Iraqi dissidents as Ahmad Chalabi and Kanan Makiya from Iran to the Kurdish-controlled zone in northern Iraq. It takes little knowledge of Iran's theocratic hierarchy to conclude that the leading Iraqi proponents of US military action against Saddam do not get together in Teheran to coordinate their activities without a green light from Teheran's reigning ayatollahs.

MANSOUR FARHANG

ANOTHER REASON TO STOP THIS WAR

Boulder, Colo.

■ There's another reason that war on Iraq is wrong: its environmental impact. This war could have long-term health consequences for the entire region because of the threat posed by US depleted uranium (DU) ammunition. While depleted uranium is "only" half as radioactive as normal uranium, it is potentially just as deadly when its dust gets into the human body. DU has been linked to leukemia and kidney damage when it is ingested. DU weapons will not be used in a barren desert, as in the first Gulf War—they will be used in the fertile crescent of Iraq. DU dust from ammunition will be swirling around the best farmland in the region and will also be coming dangerously close to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the only source of fresh water for the entire area. This war will also be fought on the streets of Baghdad, and countless women, children and other civilians will be exposed to this very dangerous dust.

With all the talk in the mainstream media about the war as a clean and tidy operation, remember that Iraq's civilians will be suffering the aftereffects for a great many years.

PAUL HOPKER

WAR IS PEACE

Warner Springs, Calif.

■ I believe... Bombing for peace is logical. The USA Patriot Act is patriotic. Good Americans don't protest or question their government. Corporate executives can be entrusted with our elder citizens' healthcare. Forests need to be cut down in order to save them. Oil companies will protect our environment. Our enormous new budget deficits are no problem. Pre-emptive war is legal by international law. We can liberate Iraqi civilians by launching 8,000 missiles into their cities and shooting our incredibly radioactive depleted uranium bullets all over their country. The world's people support this slaughter, and Jesus thinks it's OK, too.

Mr. President, I believe... I believe... I believe...

DAVID SINGELYN

WOMEN AGAINST WAR

Cave Junction, Ore.

■ Katha Pollitt is right to both celebrate and question the Lysistrata Project ["Subject to Debate," March 24]. The notion that women can influence men by withholding sex harks back to the days when that was women's only power, and even that ace in the hole (so to speak) is always subject to forcible rape. But as much as women have moved into the spheres of politics and commerce, and as much power as we may be able to wield with nontraditional levers, women retain one power that is larger than all the others: the power to reproduce. Our objective must be to stop all wars and not just this one against Iraq. All wars are ultimately about resources. As the human population expands exponentially and resources shrink, wars over oil, water and eventually food will become more frequent and intense. There is only one way out of this trap the human species has created for itself: reproductive control. There is only one humane way to achieve reproductive control, and that is to place it firmly in the hands of women. The modern-day Lysistrata and her troops must seize the treasuries of the world and provide comprehensive reproductive healthcare, contraception and abortion services to all women. The cost would be a fraction of what the world currently spends on war. Only women can take and use this power. It's time we got to it.

KELPIE WILSON

www.lysistrata.org

LAURA BUSH & WAR

Nashville, Tenn.

■ Thank you for Tony Kushner's "Only We Who Guard the Mystery Shall Be Unhappy" [March 24]. It's the most complex, moving, savage piece I've ever read in your pages.

MARK SMITH

Brooklyn, NY

■ Yowsa. The normally wise and thoughtful *Nation* editorial staff really crossed the line on that Tony Kushner piece. It was a cheap shot in incredibly poor taste.

CAROL HOLSINGER

CELEBRITIES AGAINST WAR

Medford, Mass.

■ Eric Alterman wrote about his dismay that celebrities were at the forefront of public dissent on war in Iraq ["Stop the Presses," March 24]. David Fenton, the PR man who set Alterman straight, could have noted that the PhDs who study war and peace for a living—exactly the sort of experts Alterman would like to lead the antiwar movement—have done an awful job at

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EDITORIALS

Rumsfeld Should Go

The Defense Secretary should resign—now. Although George W. Bush is ultimately responsible for the catastrophe unfolding in Iraq, it is Donald Rumsfeld who is the Cabinet member directly charged with planning and carrying out the nation's wars. He should take with him those two self-inflated policy warriors, Paul Wolfowitz (his deputy) and Richard Perle (head of the Defense Policy Board until his venality was exposed). Together with Vice President Cheney, they were the principal architects of this venture, in pursuit of which they have deceived the American people, misled US soldiers whose lives are at risk, scorned the United Nations and defied international law.

We do not assume that these armchair generals will in fact resign. Instead, we present this indictment in the hope that, as Americans begin to grasp the full dimensions of the debacle in Iraq, they too will demand their removal. Citizens may also question the continued presence in government of National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of State Colin Powell, who were complicit in plunging our country into a war that, even if we win militarily, history will record as an unnecessary and terrible loss: We have unleashed a new era of nuclear proliferation and "pre-emption," and we have turned a majority of the world's people against us. These facts will not change even if Iraq's defenses continue to crumble and the war ends quickly.

The indictment has many counts, from misrepresenting the threat posed by Iraq, to the miscalculation of human and financial costs, to the shredding of international relationships. While carefully avoiding any reckless comments himself, Rumsfeld unleashed his subordinates and advisers to publicly make the case that the fight would be easy and the troops welcomed. Perle, for example, explained flippantly that "the Iraqi opposition is kind of like an MRE [meals ready to eat, a freeze-dried Army ration]. The ingredients are there and you just have to add water, in this case US support." Democracy cannot function without a standard of disclosure and accountability. If Rumsfeld and team had been even crudely forthcoming, the country might have resisted this bloody trap. The cowardly Congress might have paused before endorsing a premature mandate for open-ended warmaking.

The troops on the ground were misled along with their commanders. "I honestly don't think the Iraqi public wants us here," Chief Warrant Officer Sean McNeal said. "These people are not going to give up as easily as everyone expects." Rumsfeld's reaction when things turned ugly was to claim that the plans were the work of Gen. Tommy Franks and to lead an assault on the press when it reported what was happening. But this is Rumsfeld's war for the same reason Vietnam became Robert McNamara's. Rumsfeld seems to have forgotten, or never absorbed, what America learned at great price from that misbegotten war.

Dismissive of the UN and longtime advocates of unilateral action against Iraq (Rumsfeld argued on the day after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that Bush should "go against Iraq, not just Al Qaeda"), Rumsfeld and his coterie now dare to complain that Saddam is violating the laws of war and does not fight fair. But the "asymmetrical" tactics of the Iraqis should come as no surprise. The

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Vietcong did not wear uniforms either; they too hid among civilian villagers. "We are invading their country," Chief Warrant Officer Glen Woodard observes. "I'd be by my window with a shotgun too." Similarly, Rumsfeld, who rejected concerns about US treatment of Afghan and Al Qaeda prisoners, now invokes the Geneva conventions on the lawful treatment of prisoners of war. Has he forgotten the pictures of Afghan prisoners, their beards shorn against their religious beliefs, displayed in Guantánamo, held in a legal limbo without the protection of POW status? Or the two homicides in a US Army prison in Afghanistan, where an Army pathologist described the cause of death as "blunt force injuries"?

American leaders would be wise to avoid invoking the Geneva conventions—or better still to observe them. The central question in the minds of many millions around the world is whether the United States, in violation of the UN Charter and long-established terms of international law, is waging an illegal war. The brutality of that war becomes more apparent by the day, as the US military wreaks more death and destruction on Baghdad and other cities and the humanitarian crisis threatens to spiral out of control.

Our indictment is ultimately not about logistics or tactics. Even if US military power prevails in Iraq, what must be ended is a failed foreign policy many of whose key proponents are in the Pentagon. These officials are now working to insure that a US military proconsul, rather than the UN, runs postwar Iraq—ignoring the fact that this will be taken as further proof of US imperial designs. Instead, we must revive efforts to strengthen international law and international institutions. We have no illusions about how difficult this will be.

As a first step, Rumsfeld should go.

COMMENT

Lawyers Keep Out

Because September 11 "changed everything," it hasn't always been easy to find an objective yardstick by which to judge the Bush Administration's tactics in the "war on terrorism." But the Administration's latest salvo on interrogations may finally provide a measure of extremism that no one can dispute—it has actually out-Dershowitzed Alan Dershowitz.

Shortly after 9/11, Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz made a splash by proposing "torture warrants," by which courts would authorize the use of force to extract information in "ticking time bomb" situations. His suggestion—more rhetorical than anything else—was universally condemned. Yet in a pair of pending cases, the Administration has sought something even more extreme—blanket authority not only to use coercion but also to bar lawyers from attending interrogations, because their presence might offset the coercion.

The first case is that of José Padilla, the Brooklyn-born US citizen arrested at O'Hare Airport last May on suspicion that he was planning to detonate a radioactive "dirty bomb." He has been held incommunicado for nearly ten months as an "enemy combatant." In December a federal judge in New York City or-

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dered the government to let Padilla talk to the lawyers who have been challenging his detention. The government objected, arguing that allowing Padilla to speak to his lawyer might interfere with its ability to coerce information from him. In short, it seeks to justify the violation of one constitutional right—the right to counsel—by arguing that it is necessary in order to commit another violation—coercing his confession. On March 11, the district court reaffirmed its decision, but two weeks later the government announced that it would appeal.

The government's position, that detainees cannot talk to their lawyers, has produced absurd results. For about a year the federal courts and the nation have been debating the President's power to lock up American citizens as "enemy combatants." The dispute, arising from the detentions of Padilla and Yasser Hamdi, also a US citizen, has resulted in at least nine judicial decisions and literally thousands of news stories and editorials. Yet because Padilla and Hamdi have been barred from participating in their own cases or speaking to anyone who is, the litigation and debate have proceeded thus far without any input from the two men whose liberty is actually at stake.

The government argues that if its interrogations are to work, it must be free to develop a "relationship of trust and dependency" that leads the suspect to give up all hope and spill his guts. Fostering "dependency" and hopelessness would be necessary only where the suspect does not want to confess of his own free will. But the Supreme Court has ruled that any interrogation that obtains information by overriding a suspect's free will is unconstitutional. It has further ruled that interrogating a suspect for thirty-six hours straight is a per se violation of due process, because any statement obtained thereafter could not possibly be a product of free will. In Padilla's case the government seeks to block access to a lawyer so that it can continue a coercive incommunicado interrogation that has already lasted ten months.

In a second case that has received virtually no attention but may be even more important, the Justice Department has asked the Supreme Court to rule that as long as the government doesn't use a confession in a criminal trial, the Constitution does not bar coercive interrogations. In *Chavez v. Martinez*, a police officer questioned Oliverio Martinez off and on for forty-five minutes while he was lying on a stretcher, having just been shot at close range in the face, back and knees by another officer. Martinez, who was blinded and paralyzed by his wounds, repeatedly cried out in pain, begged for treatment and said that he did not want to talk.

In the Supreme Court, the government argued that no constitutional rights were violated because the information obtained from Martinez was not used against him in a criminal trial. As long as its tactics do not "shock the conscience," the government maintained, it should be free to extract information against individuals' free will, even when national security is not at stake.

Administration supporters routinely defend government actions by proclaiming that "the Constitution is not a suicide pact." But would it really be "suicide" to allow Padilla and Hamdi to consult with the lawyers trying to represent them, or to bar coercion as a method of interrogation? We would do well to heed the words of Senator John Stockton in 1871: "Constitutions are chains with which men bind themselves in their sane moments that they may not die by a suicidal hand in the day of their frenzy." Alan Dershowitz and John Ashcroft notwithstanding, some principles should not be sacrificed. DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu) is the author, with James Dempsey, of Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security *(New Press).*

The Washington Wars

By the start of the third week of war, Bush was bogged down in Mesopotamia and Washington. The war did not open as well as had been predicted by prominent hawks, including Vice President Cheney. It appeared possible that George W. Bush's invasion could turn into a long-haul endeavor (good news for North Korea). Then again, a tipping point could be reached, and yesterday's morass could rapidly transform into military triumph, as happened in Afghanistan. The political implications of either scenario are impossible to predict. A quick win might be forgotten (cf. Bush I) or much appreciated by the voting public. A difficult but lengthy war might lead to political upheaval, or it could strengthen the bond between the President and portions of the public. In any event, the initial stall did not cost Bush much political capital, for in Washington there has been little politicking on the war.

Democrats haven't said much about its course. Few members of Congress have joined the debate over whether the initial Bush-Rumsfeld-Franks war plan was sufficient. Few have weighed in on important and contentious matters related to the coming occupation (presuming the war is won). Television bookers report that they have difficulty rounding up D guests. Antiwar Democratic presidential candidates—most notably former Vermont Governor Howard Dean and Representative Dennis Kucinich—have decried the invasion. But many Democrats have taken up residence in Cheney's undisclosed location. Senator Bill Nelson, a Florida Democrat who supports the war, complained that the White House is stonewalling Congressional requests for information on the cost and duration of the war. And Democrats and Republicans have grumbled about Bush's attempt to spend $75 billion in emergency war funding—*aka* "the down payment"—as he sees fit. But these are mere skirmishes. "People are waiting to see what happens," says a Democratic senator. "I think the shit's going to hit the fan [with the war]. But it's too early to come out and say that."

Untroubled on the war by the Democrats, Bush has seen sand clog the gears of his programs closer to home. In recent weeks, with the help of moderate Republicans, Senate Democrats won votes halving Bush's new round of tax cuts to $350 billion and defeating his attempt to open a stretch of the Alaska wilderness to oil development. The Democrats sustained a filibuster against appeals court nominee Miguel Estrada. Bush's faith-based initiative has lost steam. His push for legislation limiting jury awards was derailed. Bush has also been drawn into a tussle with Congressional Democrats over how much money to spend on homeland security. Representative David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, introduced a $12.3 bil-

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COMMENT

lion package, three times the amount Bush requested. While Bush appears ready to go eyeball-to-eyeball with Democrats over protecting the country, Congressional Republicans, who don't want to be accused of being cheapskates, are worried about being caught in the middle.

At the beginning of the year, Bush went on the offensive, proposing a new round of budget-busting tax cuts, returning defeated conservative judicial nominations to the Senate while all but promising a war in Iraq. "It's now hard to see much movement with his domestic agenda," says a senior Senate Republican aide. "All the Administration's energies are concentrated on war." And in the midst of war, the White House was unable to convince a handful of moderate Senate Republicans to stick with their President on tax cuts. "His proposal to abolish the dividend tax was a complete miscalculation," the aide says. "There's not a lot of stomach politically for tax cuts in a time of war, much less ones skewed toward the wealthy. The $3 trillion deficit is concerning even Republicans. Supply-siders have lost significant traction."

Bush's in-your-face initiatives managed to unite Senate Democrats—something their leaders often fail to do. Judicial filibusters tend to be tough to maintain, but Democrats' anger at the White House refusal to release information related to the Estrada nomination held them together. And though the Dems lost the first vote on Bush's tax cuts because several Democrats opposed to all cuts wouldn't vote even for a smaller package of cuts, they were able to regroup to deliver Bush a loss.

But blocking a popular wartime President is not the same as gaining ground. Bush is still poised to add tax cuts to his 2001 bundle. His other resurrected judicial nominees—as conservative, if not more so, as Estrada—are likely to be approved. By being audacious, Bush managed to shift the discourse so in his favor that even a partial win is a substantial policy victory. (In Iraq, he can't use this strategy.) And there's no evidence yet that the Democrats can score points against Bush with accusations that he's underfunding homeland security and engaging in fiscal recklessness. "This country is laying off teachers, while Bush is cutting taxes and fighting wars," a Democratic House member says. "If we can't make this message obvious, something's wrong with Democrats."

The war will end up shaping, if not completely determining, Bush's standing and influence as a President. But for now it's been accompanied by a political paralysis of sorts. Which is not such a bad thing in George Bush's Washington. DAVID CORN

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Resignation of Richard Perle, Captain of The Sissy Hawk Brigade, From the Chairmanship of The Defense Policy Board

And so for Richard Perle was writ
The second graf of his obit:
This soaring bird of hawkish myth
Was grounded when discovered with
His talon in the cookie jar
While reaching for a small *pourboire*.*

* *To use Old Europe's language, French,*
May seem to hawks contrarian.
Pardon. *Our friends have changed too fast*
For me to learn Bulgarian.

TV's Conflicted Experts

Perhaps Americans can be excused for imagining that "regime change" in Iraq would be a cakewalk. So did Don Rumsfeld, who lashed back at critics accusing him of approving a too-optimistic war plan. Like Rumsfeld, a veritable army of ex-generals playing military analysts on TV seem to have gotten the story wrong, too, and are only now, very belatedly, changing their tune.

One might have expected a pro-military slant in any former general's initial estimation of the US invasion. But some of these ex-generals also have ideological or financial stakes in the war. Many hold paid advisory board and executive positions at defense companies and serve as advisers for groups that promoted an invasion of Iraq. Their offscreen commitments raise questions about whether they are influenced by more than just "a lifetime of experience and objectivity"—in the words of Lieut. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, a military analyst for NBC News—as they explain the risks of this war to the American people.

McCaffrey and his NBC colleague Col. Wayne Downing, who reports nightly from Kuwait, are both on the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, a Washington-based lobbying group formed last October to bolster public support for a war. Its stated mission is to "engage in educational advocacy efforts to mobilize US and international support for policies aimed at ending the aggression of Saddam Hussein," and among its targets are the US and European media. The group is chaired by Bruce Jackson, former vice president of defense giant Lockheed Martin (manufacturer of the F-117 Nighthawk, the F-16 Fighting Falcon and other aircraft in use in Iraq), and includes such neocon luminaries as former Defense Policy Board chair Richard Perle. Downing has also served as an unpaid lobbyist and adviser to the Iraqi National Congress, an Administration-backed (and bankrolled) opposition group that stands to profit from regime change in Iraq.

NBC News has yet to disclose those or other involvements that give McCaffrey a vested interest in Operation Iraqi Freedom. McCaffrey, who commanded an infantry division in the Gulf War, is now on the board of Mitretek, Veritas Capital and two Veritas companies, Raytheon Aerospace and Integrated Defense Technologies—all of which have multimillion-dollar government defense contracts. Despite that, IDT is floundering—its stock price has fallen by half since March 2002—a situation that one stock

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analyst says war could remedy. Since IDT is a specialist in tank upgrades, the company stands to benefit significantly from a massive ground war. McCaffrey has recently emerged as the most outspoken military critic of Rumsfeld's approach to the war, but his primary complaint is that "armor and artillery don't count" enough. In McCaffrey's recent MSNBC commentary, he exclaimed enthusiastically, "Thank God for the Abrams tank and... the Bradley fighting vehicle," and added for good measure that the "war isn't over until we've got a tank sitting on top of Saddam's bunker." In March alone, IDT received more than $14 million worth of contracts relating to Abrams and Bradley machinery parts and support hardware.

Downing has his own entanglements. The colonel serves on the board of directors at Metal Storm Ltd., a ballistics-technology company that has contracts with US and Australian defense departments. The company's executive director told the *New York Times* on March 31 that Metal Storm technologies would "provide some significant advantage" in the type of urban warfare being fought in Iraq.

At Fox News, military analysts Lieut. Col. Bill Cowan and Maj. Robert Bevelacqua are CEO and vice president, respectively, of wvc3 Group, a defense consulting firm that helps arms companies sell their wares to the government. It recently inked an exclusive deal with New Zealand's TGR Helicorp and will help the company hawk its military aviation equipment to the United States. The firm trades on its inside contacts with the US military, and a message on its website reads, "We use our credibility to promote your technology" (accompanied by the sound of loud gunfire).

The networks don't seem too concerned about what the analysts do on their own time. "We are employing them for their military expertise, not their political views," Elena Nachmanoff, vice president of talent development at NBC News, told *The Nation*. She says that NBC's military experts play an influential role behind the scenes, briefing executive producers and holding seminars for staffers that provide "texture for both on-air pieces and background." Defense contracts, she adds, are "not our interest."

"We expect the analysts to keep their other interests out of their commentary, or we stop using them," says Kim Hume, Fox Washington bureau chief, though she concedes that the network has yet to sever its relationship with any analyst for this reason. She says the network is aware of various political and financial ties (Fox's website mentions wvc3 in Cowan's and Bevelacqua's bios) but refused to discuss the issue. Hume says only that Fox military analyst Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely, who represents several information-technology companies, is valuable as a commentator on psychological operations.

Shortly after the Vietnam War, Vallely pioneered a concept he called MindWar, a strategy that uses "electronic media—television and radio" in the "deliberate, aggressive convincing of all participants in a war that we will win that war." With the televised version of Operation Iraqi Freedom, we may be watching his theory at work—and at a tidy profit, too.

DANIEL BENAIM, VISHESH KUMAR AND PRIYANKA MOTAPARTHY

Daniel Benaim and Priyanka Motaparthy are Nation *interns. Vishesh Kumar is a freelance writer living in New York City.*

Passings

In its tribute to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who died on March 26, *The Economist* mentions that his office washroom displayed a framed cover of the September 22, 1979, issue of *The Nation*, "Moynihan: The Conscience of a Neoconservative." Pat Moynihan thus had the rare distinction among politicians of inspiring an entire issue of *The Nation*, comprising critical analyses of his politics and policies (though there was praise as well). In the intervening years we could probably have assembled enough material for another Moynihan issue, but after being elected senator from New York in 1976, Moynihan became a less reliable neoconservative and a more conventional Democratic politician. Dapper and donnish, bibulous and charming, Moynihan was obviously ambitious, else he would have remained a comfortably tenured Harvard professor rather than building an eclectic government résumé that included assistant labor secretary in the Kennedy Administration, ambassadorships to India and the United Nations, as well as senator. In the 1960s he adopted the neoconservative views of Irving Kristol and other apostate liberals, his credentials burnished by his 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. As the black academic St. Clair Drake wrote in these pages in 1975, "Moynihan's scholarship has been subordinated to advocacy, and he employs data to justify programs of action, not to test hypotheses," which may explain the inflamed reception *The Negro Family* received. It was particularly resented by African-Americans, and it was the subject of a scholarly dissection by Herbert Gutman in our Moynihan issue.

Moynihan moved on to become the Nixon Administration's house liberal, advising "benign neglect" of race issues (meaning, he said, cool the rhetoric, but giving comfort to neo-segs) telling off the Third World in the UN, where he won fame for denouncing the infamous "Zionism is racism" resolution. His undiplomatic pugnacity put him in bad with his boss, Henry Kissinger, but won him a ticket to the Senate, where he would oppose welfare reform Clinton-style, various Reagan imperial adventures, Gulf War I and encroaching government secrecy.

* * *

Herbert Aptheker, who died on March 17, at 87, was one of the first white historians to render truly the African-American experience. He was author of *American Negro Slave Revolts*, among many other books, and edited the monumental *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* and the writings and correspondence of his mentor W.E.B. Du Bois. He and his wife, Fay, were active members of the Communist Party until 1991, and this affiliation barred him from teaching positions until late in life. Columbia history professor Eric Foner says, "He was one of the key pioneers of modern African-American history. At a time when most scholars still held to the view that slavery was a benign institution with little slave resistance, that abolitionists were irresponsible fanatics, and that the Civil War was a family quarrel between white Americans, Aptheker challenged them to make blacks active agents in the telling of American history."

(Comment Continued on Page 24)

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JONATHAN SCHELL

The Limits of Interpretation

A Vesuvius of violence has erupted from the dead center of American life, the executive branch of the government. No counterbalancing power, whether in the United States, the United Nations or elsewhere, has so far been able to contain it. Right now, it is raining destruction chiefly on one country, Iraq, half a world away from the United States. But others—Iran, Syria, North Korea—have already been named as candidates for attack. The war was launched in the name of a policy that asserts, in unusually explicit and clear language, an American claim of military dominance over all other nations on earth, which, in the words of George W. Bush, should bow to America's unchallengeable military might, give up any "destabilizing" attempt to catch up and restrict any further "rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace." (The prospective world order that military rivalry to the United States would "destabilize" is, clearly, American global hegemony.) The pillars of this new policy of supremacy are too familiar by now to require much elaboration: American unilateralism, the replacement of the cold war policy of containment with "pre-emption" and assertion of a right, at the pleasure of the United States, to overthrow other governments.

The war, indeed, is revolutionary in at least three distinct arenas. It is aimed, of course, at the destruction of the government in Iraq. It is aimed, further, at producing a political revolution in the entire Middle East. Finally, it announces the destruction of the existing world order (such as it is) in favor of one dominated by the United States. Just how radical this latter revolution is is suggested by some recent comments by one of the architects of the new policy, Richard Perle, until recently chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board. In a recent article in *The Guardian*, he wrote of the United Nations: "The chatterbox on the Hudson [*sic*] will continue to bleat." (How the UN can chatter and bleat at the same time is not explained.) But Perle's target is larger: "What will die is the fantasy of the UN as the foundation of a new world order. As we sift the debris, it will be important to preserve, the better to understand, the intellectual wreckage of the liberal conceit of safety through international law administered by international institutions."

In addition, a fourth revolution threatens—of the American constitutional order. In a culmination of the long decline of Congress's war power, the Congressional resolution authorizing this long-considered "war of choice" almost formally abdicated that choice and gave it to the executive. All that was missing was a surrender ceremony in which the defeated legislative branch handed over the war sword, placed in its hands more than two centuries ago by the country's founders, to the President.

Around the world, citizens and governments alike have read and absorbed these announcements of America's global ambitions. With near-unanimity, they have reacted with alarm and dismay. Meanwhile, the war itself has aroused widespread revulsion. In the United States, however, where public opinion polls show that seven in ten people have rallied in support of the war, the picture is different. One of the peculiarities of the scene is the refusal of many of those supporters to acknowledge the larger policy in which it is embedded (if I may use that term). In early February, for example, the *Washington Post*, which has consistently favored the war, stated that it must not "be seen as an exercise in Mr. Bush's new doctrine of pre-emption, though ideologues on both sides would portray it as such." The formulation "ideologues on both sides" was arresting. One of those ideologues, after all, was evidently the President himself, who in the plainest terms has subscribed to the pre-emption policy and then named three nations—Iraq, Iran and North Korea—that, as members of an "axis of evil," are targets. On the other "side" are citizens and commentators—I am one—who believe that the war is indeed the first application of the policy of pre-emption, not because we are ideologues but because the President and his Cabinet have repeatedly said that it is. The core of the policy is the Administration's resolve to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction by military force. Pre-emption is necessary, the President has explained, because containment will not work. Perhaps the most important of the debates that are necessary, therefore, is whether this policy is workable or wise. That it is neither is strongly suggested by North Korea's acquisition—or decision to acquire—nuclear weapons and Iran's evident determination to do the same.

The attempt to save the war from its initiators and implementors has survived the war's beginning. Some of the war's supporters are upset to discover that the Administration's explanations of its policies have been taken seriously by a horrified world. They seem to be seeking some other way of looking at the war that would be acceptable to the indignant international community. In England, for example, *Guardian* columnist Hugo Young has counseled Prime Minister Tony Blair to save himself from "taint" by distancing himself from certain particulars of Bush's war policy. "What Iraqis see," he writes, "and the world along with them, is a hegemon going about its business of domination, and barely any longer interested in why it is hated for doing so." He advises that Blair defy Bush and support UN administration of a postwar Iraq. Here in the United States, David Remnick of *The New Yorker* has taken a similar position. There are, he admits, "conservative ideologues" in the Administration who "came to power with a grand, unilateralist project and a palpable distaste for international institutions and alliances"—but he calls them only a faction, as if the President himself had not, in statement after statement, embraced their agenda. He wants the war to be "rescued from the impulse to make it part of a grander imperial project." Who will do it? Remnick, too, emerges as a Blairite. Secretary of State Colin Powell is also mentioned. But the war is not Blair's, nor is it Powell's. It is Rumsfeld's war and Cheney's war and, above all, it is Bush's war. The world believes this, and it is right. There is no decent limited, multilateral war struggling to free itself from the brutal, unilateral, hegemonic war. The war is what its authors say it is. It cannot be interpreted into something else.

Jonathan Schell, the Nation Institute's Harold Willens Peace Fellow, is the author of the forthcoming The Unconquerable World *(Metropolitan).*

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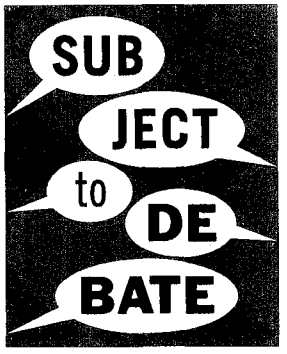
KATHA POLLITT

In the Waiting Room



"WE ARE IN A FUNDING EMERGENCY TODAY," read the e-mail from the New York Abortion Access Fund. Four women, who had come to New York City for second-trimester abortions unavailable in their home states, were about to be sent home because, despite heroic efforts, a clinic social worker had been unable to raise enough money to pay for their procedures, which cost between $1,600 and $2,000. Belinda, from Maryland, needed $750 more. Miranda, from Philadelphia, needed $595 more. Evelynne, from Maryland, needed $445 more. Karina, a 15-year-old rape victim from Massachusetts, needed $1,500 more. The women (these are not their real names) had traveled long distances and had spent the night hoping against hope that the money would be found: At twenty-three weeks, this was their last chance.

Belinda, Miranda, Evelynne and Karina are the human face of the current Congressional debate over "partial-birth abortion," a term invented by anti-choicers that has no precise medical meaning and cannot be found in any medical text. Yet it has obtained wide currency thanks to the media, which, whether out of laziness or ignorance or fear of seeming too liberal, use it far more often than such terms as "dilation and extraction" and "dilation and evacuation," which describe actual methods used in second- and third-term abortions. (A recent Nexis search found that over the past six months, "partial birth" was used 427 times, while "dilation and extraction" was used only 32 times.) The oxymoronic "partial-birth abortion," with accompanying gory description—crushed skull, sucked-out brains, half-delivered fetus—was a stroke of public relations genius; another is the phrase "late term."

When is "late term"? Well, it's when you have a "partial-birth abortion." It is, in other words, a foggy expression that intentionally conflates the second trimester of pregnancy, when according to *Roe v. Wade*, abortion can be regulated before viability only to safeguard the woman's health, and the third trimester, when abortion can legally be banned except to preserve the woman's life or health. By this sleight of hand, "late term" suggests that most second-trimester fetuses are viable (although they almost never are, except at the very end) and paints "partial-birth abortions" as legal infanticide. Thus the anti-choicers reframe themselves as the commonsensical moderates and pro-choicers as the callous extremists.

Going after "partial-birth abortion" is a brilliant tactic. The phrase doesn't insult the pregnant woman the way "convenience abortion," "abortion as birth control" and "abortion as murder" do, implying that women get pregnant out of laziness and kill on a whim; and a ban appears to affect only the kind of abortion a woman can have, not whether she gets to have one at all. But the smoke and mirrors of "partial-birth abortion" language may be used to limit many common abortion procedures.

Propaganda works: There is some evidence from polls that young women are more likely to oppose legal abortion than comparable women even ten years ago, and, according to an anecdotal but suggestive feature story in the *New York Times* ("Surprise, Mom, I'm Against Abortion," March 30), the furor over "partial-birth abortion" is one reason. (Abstinence-only sex ed and, paradoxically, the increased use of birth control and emergency contraception are others: The better young women get at controlling their own fertility, the easier it is for them to see women with crisis pregnancies as slatterns and sluts, especially given the greater reliance on abortion by poor women and women of color.)

On March 13, the Senate passed a ban on "partial-birth abortion," which, since it avoids any reference to gestational age, constitutes a flagrant attack on *Roe*. The House is sure to follow (we'll be watching the vote of new pro-*Roe* convert Dennis Kucinich), and Bush can hardly wait to sign it. Never mind that, like the Nebraska law struck down by the Supreme Court three years ago in *Stenberg v. Carhart*, the Senate bill contains no health exception for the woman.

Abortions at twenty weeks and beyond make up less than 2 percent of all abortions. So how does a woman twenty-three weeks pregnant come to be sitting in an abortion clinic waiting room so far from home? According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the three most common reasons are "she didn't realize she was pregnant" (71 percent of women surveyed); "she had difficulty making the arrangements" (including gathering funding, finding a provider in her area or making travel arrangements—48 percent of women gave this response); and "she was afraid to tell her parents or partner" (33 percent). The stories of the four women bear out these findings. Belinda, for example, kept getting her period through the first trimester; Karina, the rape victim, is an immigrant living in a parental-consent state, whose parents still live in South America. Even with help from her boyfriend and his parents, she had only $300 to pay the clinic. Young women, poor women, women in a hundred kinds of trouble—this is the real face of "partial-birth abortion."

The good news is that NYAAF's e-mail appeal was a phenomenal success. Within three hours, a loose network of women offering donations as small as $10 had raised the needed funds with even a little left over to start an emergency fund for the next time. Unfortunately, that next time is sure to come. Legal restrictions, combined with obstacles to public funding, put abortions out of reach for far too many women and, ironically, push more abortions beyond the first trimester. If you would like to help NYAAF make legal abortion a reality for women like Belinda, Miranda, Evelynne and Karina, please send a check, large or small, to NYAAF, FDR Station, Box 7569, New York, NY 10150.

P.S. As an antidote to antichoice propaganda that presents abortion as an inevitable source of shame, sorrow and regret—and prochoice pablum about what a painful choice it always is—take a look at www.imnotsorry.net, where women are posting positive stories about abortions that left them flooded with relief, eager to move on and more self-reliant. The brainchild of Patricia Beninato of Richmond, Virginia, the site revives the old feminist idea of "Abortion without apology"—and not a moment too soon. ■

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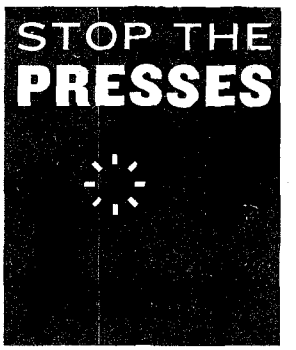
ERIC ALTERMAN

Can We Talk?



C.L. Sulzberger would not have liked this war. Back in 1937, *New York Times* Washington bureau chief Arthur Krock was hoping to be named editorial page editor. As Gay Talese tells it in *The Kingdom and the Power*, Sulzberger would not even discuss it. He explained to Krock, "It's a Jewish paper and we have a number of Jewish reporters working for us. But in all the years I've been here, we have never put a Jew in the showcase."

This war has put Jews in the showcase as never before. Its primary intellectual architects—Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and Douglas Feith—are all Jewish neoconservatives. So, too, are many of its prominent media cheerleaders, including William Kristol, Charles Krauthammer and Marty Peretz. Joe Lieberman, the nation's most conspicuous Jewish politician, has been an avid booster, going so far as to rebuke his former partner Al Gore and much of his own party.

Then there's the "Jews control the media" problem. It's probably not particularly relevant that the families who own the *Times* and the *Washington Post* are Jewish, but let's not pretend this is so in the case of the Jewish editors of, say, *U.S. News & World Report* and *The New Republic*. Mortimer Zuckerman is head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and Peretz is unofficial chair of the American Arab Defamation Committee. Neither is shy about filling his magazine with news Jews can use.

To make matters worse, many of these Jewish hard-liners—"Likudniks" in the current parlance—appear, at least from a distance, to be behaving in accordance with traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes. Much to the delight of genuine anti-Semites of the left and right, the idea of a new war to remove Saddam was partially conceived at the behest of Likud politician Benjamin Netanyahu in a document written expressly for him by Perle, Feith and others in 1996. Some, like Perle, apparently see the influence they wield as an opportunity to get rich. What's more, many of these same Jews joined Rumsfeld and Cheney in underselling the difficulty of the war, in what may have been a ruse designed to embroil America in a broad military conflagration that would help smite Israel's enemies. Did Perle, for instance, genuinely believe "support for Saddam, including within his military organization, will collapse at the first whiff of gunpowder"? Is Wolfowitz really so ignorant of history as to believe the Iraqis would welcome us as "their hoped-for liberators"?

The character of this Administration, unfortunately, adds further fuel to the stereotypical fire. Unlike, say, Tony Blair, George W. Bush does not readily give the impression of having a geopolitical clue. Hence, he appears rather easily manipulated by the smart fellows with their fancy concepts and Ivy League degrees who surround him. (Yes, I know about Bush's degrees, but they're never part of the story.) Rapidly shifting conventional wisdom has already begun to blame Bush advisers' "bum advice," according to one *Washington Post* report, for the war's decidedly not-so-cakewalk-like character. A really good conspiracy theorist would begin to wonder if the Jews are being set up to take the fall when things go badly.

A big part of the problem in addressing the "Jewish war" conspiracy thesis is the reticence of almost all sides to broach the issue of Israeli and American Jewish influence on US foreign policy. A few writers, most notably Stanley Hoffmann, Robert Kaiser and Mickey Kaus, have raised the question gingerly. But writing on the *Washington Post* op-ed page, *New Republic* editor Lawrence Kaplan insists that even raising "the specter of dual loyalty" is "toxic." Kaus noted accurately in *Slate* that the dual loyalty taboo is "quite openly designed to stop people from raising the Likudnik issue." And it works.

This is all very confusing to your nice Jewish columnist. My own dual loyalties—there, I admitted it—were drilled into me by my parents, my grandparents, my Hebrew school teachers and my rabbis, not to mention Israeli teen-tour leaders and AIPAC college representatives. It was just about the only thing they all agreed upon. Yet this milk- (and honey-) fed loyalty to Israel as the primary component of American Jewish identity—always taught in the context of the Holocaust—inspires a certain confusion in its adherents, namely: Whose interests come first, America's or Israel's? Leftist landsmen are certain that an end to the occupation and a peaceful and prosperous Palestinian state are the best ways to secure both Israeli security and American interests. Likudniks think it's best for both Israel and the United States to beat the crap out of as many Arabs as possible, as "force is the only thing these people understand."

But we ought to be honest enough to at least imagine a hypothetical clash between American and Israeli interests. Here, I feel pretty lonely admitting that, every once in a while, I'm going to go with what's best for Israel. As I was lectured over and over while growing up, America can make a million mistakes and nobody is going to take away our country and murder us. Israel is nowhere near as vulnerable as many would have us believe, but it remains a tiny Jewish island surrounded by a sea of largely hostile Arabs. Perhaps it was a strategic mistake for America to rush to Israel's aid in 1973, but given the alternative, I really don't care. As Moshe Dayan told Golda Meir at the time, the "third temple" was crumbling. Tough luck if it meant higher gasoline prices at home.

I can't profess to speak for the motivations of others, and by the numbers, American Jews seem no more prowar than the US population, and maybe even a little less. But I'd be surprised if the Administration's hawkish Likudniks were immune to the emotional pull of defending Dayan's "third temple." Our inability to engage the question only forces the discussion into subterranean and sometimes anti-Semitic territory. If the Likudniks played an unsavory role in fomenting this war (and future wars), and further discussion will help illuminate this unhappy fact, then I say, "Let there be light." If something is "toxic" merely to talk about, the problem is probably not in the talking, but in the doing. ■

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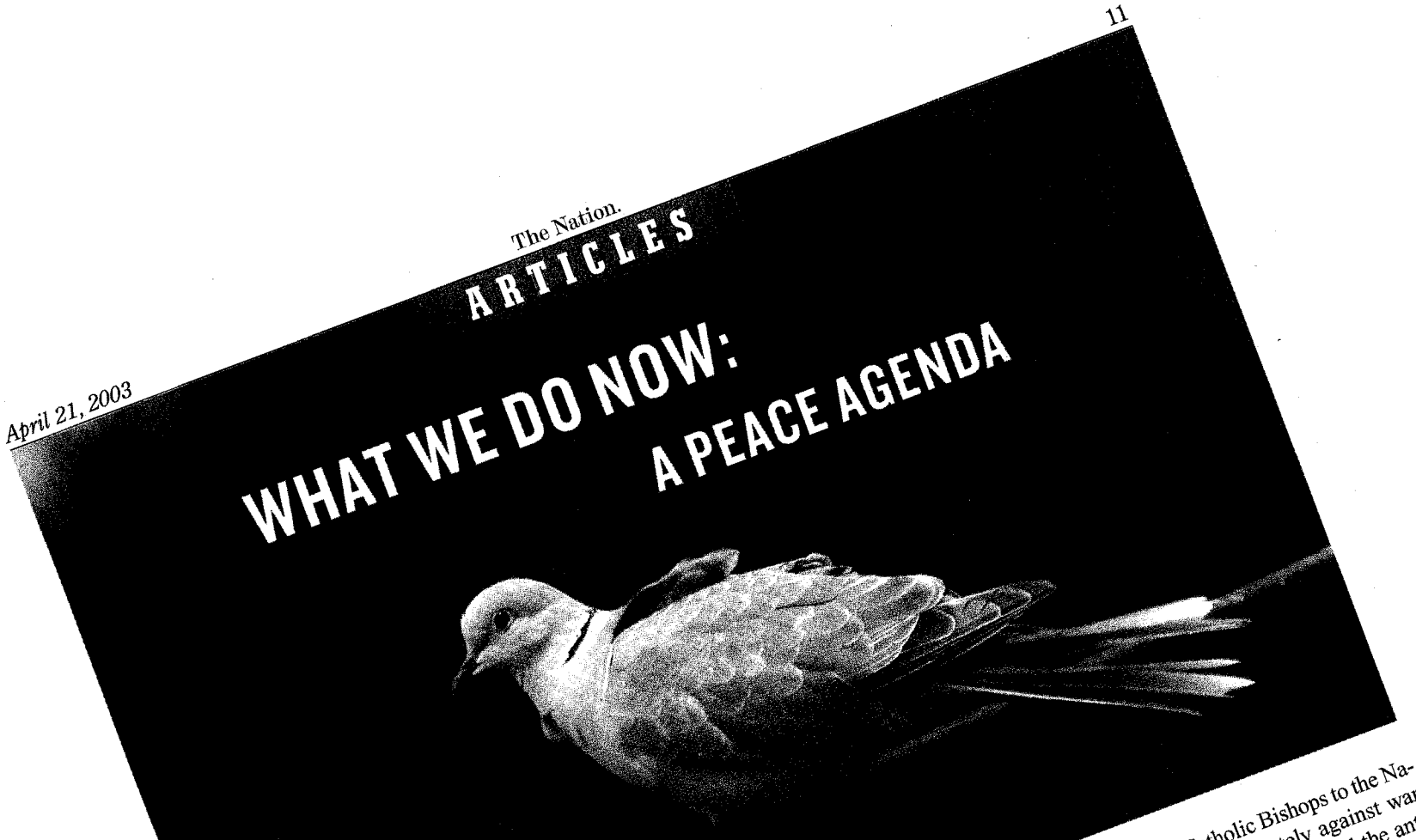
ARTICLES

WHAT WE DO NOW: A PEACE AGENDA



Over the past six months, we've witnessed the emergence of a global antiwar movement so large it has seemed almost possible that US war plans could be stopped. But now that the war has begun, even without UN sanction, the antiwar movement is at a crossroads. Following is a forum in which David Cortright leads off a discussion on what the peace movement's goals should be now and in the longer term; his essay is followed by three responses.

—The Editors

As the Bush Administration continues its illegal and unjust military invasion of Iraq, we must steel ourselves for the difficult days that lie ahead. We must also recognize that our work for peace has only just begun.

We should not retreat from our core criticisms of Bush's war or be intimidated into silence. This war was and is completely unnecessary. Iraq was being disarmed through peaceful diplomatic means. It made numerous concessions to UN demands and was in the process of destroying missiles and disclosing its weapons activities when the United States attacked. Unprovoked war against another country without the approval of the Security Council violates the UN Charter and is illegal under US and international law. Such a war can never be just.

The outbreak of war makes our work more important and necessary than ever. It creates enormous new challenges, but it also offers new opportunities. We must organize a broadly based campaign to address the causes and consequences of this war and to prevent such misguided adventures in the future.

We can start by recognizing the tremendous accomplishments of the past few months. We have created the largest, most broadly based peace movement in history—a movement that has engaged millions of people here and around the globe. Never before have US churches, from the Conference of Catholic Bishops to the National Council of Churches, spoken so resolutely against war. Never before have so many US trade unions supported the antiwar movement. In practically every sector of society—business executives, women's groups, environmentalists, artists, musicians, African-Americans, Latinos—a strong antiwar voice has emerged. Antiwar rallies and vigils have occurred in thousands of communities, and many cities have passed antiwar declarations.

The fact that this effort could not prevent war reflects not the weaknesses of our movement but the failures of American democracy and the entrenched power of US militarism. The Bush Administration has shown utter contempt for public opinion at home and abroad. It manipulated legitimate public concerns about terrorism to assert a false connection between Iraq and Al Qaeda and refused to tell the American people or Congress how much the invasion and occupation would cost until after the war was already under way.

Our short-term objectives will depend on how the war unfolds, whether it is a short, "successful" military campaign or becomes a drawn-out war of attrition with constant sniper or guerrilla attacks. We hope there will be few casualties, both for Iraqis and Americans, but we know that a quick victory will bolster the very policies we abhor. We urge our government to do everything possible to avoid unnecessary death and destruction. Our short-term political agenda should include the following demands and issues:

§ Protect the innocent. The United States should provide massive humanitarian assistance and economic aid for the Iraqi people and other vulnerable populations in the region. We should support the reconstruction and development of Iraq. This assistance should be administered by civilian agencies, not the Pentagon. We should also demand, or if necessary pro-

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vide, an accurate accounting of the civilian dead.

§ Support our men and women in the armed forces. We regret that their Commander in Chief has sent them on an ill-advised and unnecessary mission, but we respect and thank them for their service. We urge special support for the families of service members and reservists who have been sent to the Persian Gulf. We call for greater efforts to address the medical problems that will result from service in the gulf. More than 167,000 veterans are currently on disability as a result of their service in the first Gulf War. We condemn the cuts in veterans' benefits approved by the Republican-controlled Congress and call for increased availability of medical care and other benefits for veterans.

§ Bring home the troops. We urge the withdrawal of American military forces from Iraq as soon as possible. We oppose the creation of any long-term or permanent US military bases in Iraq.

§ No war or military threats against Iran. We oppose any attempt to coerce or threaten Iran with military attack. It is no secret that extremists in Washington and Israel favor a military strike against Iran as the next phase in the "war on terror." This would be a further catastrophe for the cause of peace and must be vigorously resisted.

RYAN INZANA

§ No war for oil. We oppose any US effort to seize control of Iraqi oil or to demand a percentage of Iraqi oil revenues. Ownership of Iraqi oil should remain with the Iraqi people. Iraq was the first Arab nation to nationalize its petroleum resources, and it must be allowed to retain control over this wealth to rebuild its economy and society.

§ Peace in the Middle East. The United States should give active support to a genuine peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. We should pressure both sides to accept a peace settlement that ends the violence and creates two sovereign and viable states.

§ Support for regional disarmament. The Gulf War cease-fire resolution of 1991 specified that the disarmament of Iraq was to be the first step toward the creation in the Middle East of a "zone free from weapons of mass destruction." The elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq should thus lead to their elimination throughout the region.

Our response to war and military occupation in Iraq must also include a longer-term vision of an alternative US security policy. The Bush Administration claims that the deadly nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction requires a radical new foreign policy of military pre-emption and the unilateral assertion of American technological power. This is the policy being implemented in Iraq. We must offer an alternative vision, one that takes seriously the terrorism and proliferation threat but that provides a safer, less costly and ultimately more successful strategy for countering these dangers.

The outlines of our alternative strategy are visible in the policy proposals we have suggested in the current debate over Iraq. We support the disarmament of Iraq, North Korea and other nations regarded by the international community as potential proliferators. We favor vigorous UN weapons inspections to verify disarmament. We call on our government to work diplomatically through the UN Security Council. We endorse targeted sanctions (restrictions on the finances and travel of designated elites, and arms embargoes) and other means of containing recalcitrant states. We endorse lifting sanctions and providing incentives as means of inducing compliance. We support the international campaign against terrorism and urge greater cooperative efforts to prosecute and cut off the funding of those responsible for the September 11 attacks.

At the same time, we recognize that disarmament ultimately must be universal. The disarmament of Iraq must be tied to regional disarmament, which in turn must be linked to global disarmament. The double standard of the United States and other nuclear states, in which we propose to keep these deadliest of weapons indefinitely while denying them to the rest of the world, cannot endure. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty of 1968 was based on a bargain—the nuclear powers' agreeing to pursue disarmament in exchange for the rest of the world's renouncing the nuclear option. The longer the United States and its nuclear partners refuse their obligation to disarm, the greater the likelihood that the nonproliferation regime will collapse. The only true security against nuclear dangers is an enforceable ban on *all* nuclear weapons. Chemical and biological weapons are already banned. The far greater danger of nuclear weapons also must be subject to universal prohibition.

A global prohibition against all weapons of mass destruction is the best protection against the danger of terrorists' acquiring and using them. In effect, the disarmament obligations being imposed on Iraq must be applied to the entire world. All nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles should be banned everywhere, by all nations. This is the path to a safer and more secure future.

Of course, a ban on weapons of mass destruction would be meaningless without robust means of verifying and enforcing such prohibitions. A world of disarmament will require much stronger mechanisms of monitoring and enforcement than now exist. The policies we have supported for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq—rigorous inspections, targeted sanctions and multilateral coercive diplomacy—can and should be applied universally to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. The UN weapons-inspection capability should be increased a hundredfold and deployed throughout the world to monitor and verify the universal ban on weapons of mass destruction. Nations that refuse to comply with verified disarmament requirements should be subjected to targeted sanctions and coercive diplomatic pressures from the UN and other regional security organizations. Nations that cooperate with disarmament mandates should receive inducements in the form of economic assistance, trade and technology preferences, and security assurances. These policy tools, combined with a serious commitment to sustainable economic development for developing nations, are viable means for helping to assure international compliance with a global disarmament mandate.

This is not a pacifist vision that eschews all uses of military force. The threat of force is sometimes a necessary component of coercive diplomacy. In some circumstances the actual use of force—ideally in a targeted and narrow fashion, with authoriza-

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tion from the UN Security Council or regional security bodies—may be necessary. In contrast with the policy of the Bush Administration, however, the proposed approach would allow the threat or use of force only as a last resort, when all other peaceful diplomatic means have been exhausted, and only with the explicit authorization of the Security Council or regional security organizations. In no circumstance would the United States or any other nation have the right to mount a military invasion to overthrow another government for the ostensible purpose of achieving disarmament. Rather, the United States would respect the Charter of the UN and would strive to achieve disarmament and settle the differences among nations through peaceful diplomatic means.

Our immediate challenge in implementing these short- and long-term objectives is to change the political direction and leadership of the United States. In the upcoming political debates we must devote our energies to building support for our alternative foreign-policy vision and creating a mass political constituency that can hold candidates accountable to this vision. Our chances of preventing future military disasters depend in the short run on removing the Bush Administration from office and electing a new political leadership dedicated to international cooperation and peace. This is a formidable political challenge. It will be extremely difficult to accomplish by November 2004. We must begin to organize for this challenge now, however, and we must remain committed to this objective into the future, planning now for the additional election cycles that will probably be necessary to realize our goals. We must also recognize the enormity of the challenge we face in diminishing the unelected power of the national security establishment, which functions as a shadow government regardless of who is in office. These great challenges will be met only by a sustained, massive citizens' movement dedicated to the long-term challenge of fundamentally reshaping America's role in the world. The work begins now, as the military invasion of Iraq continues. We have no time to mourn. A lifetime of organizing and education lies ahead.

DAVID CORTRIGHT

David Cortright is a founder of the Win Without War coalition.

RESPONSE 1: An Agenda for Justice

David Cortright has laid out many aspects of an agenda to help the US peace movement move from the immediate work of trying to stop this war, to continuing to broaden the reach of our movement into new constituencies. We would like to add some thoughts on the challenges we face in also trying to create a comprehensive agenda for a global peace movement at the same time that we broaden the US part of that movement.

First, on the domestic front, we would supplement Cortright's ideas with a justice agenda such as that articulated in the United for Peace and Justice campaigns and in the many city council debates in the 162 cities that have passed resolutions against the war. Here two issues are paramount: protecting civil liberties, particularly involving the attacks on Arabs and other immigrant communities, and the broader threat to all of our constitutional rights; and shifting national priorities from the bloated military to meet domestic needs—especially at a time of city and state budget crises. In both these arenas, maintaining the link between the war drive and its domestic consequences has been critical in mobilizing important constituencies, particularly in communities of color, and thus helping to integrate the long-segregated US peace movements.

We would also propose broadening our agenda now to reflect the reality of our emerging worldwide peace and justice movement. Especially since the globally coordinated peace actions in more than 600 cities around the world on February 15, the international character of our movement has been strengthened. Virtually everywhere around the world, peace forces are clear that this war is not about weapons of mass destruction or democratization, and that the issue is not simply war in Iraq today but the Bush Administration's reckless drive for empire and power. Building our ties with other parts of this international mobilization will help strengthen our own movement's "anti-empire" identity—such as including our government on the list of identified proliferators.

It is also fascinating to note that in France, Germany, Italy, Brazil, the Philippines and many other countries (more than in the United States), the peace movements are made up of largely the same forces as the anti–corporate globalization or global justice movements, and, while demanding peace, they are pressing for a more equitable, just and sustainable global order.

It will take some time for a unifying agenda for the "global peace movement" to emerge, but in addition to the excellent universal disarmament agenda that Cortright lays out, it might include the following:

§ Emphasizing the primacy of internationalism and the centrality of the United Nations in all our work. That means claiming the UN as our own, as part of the global mobilization for peace, and working to empower the UN as the legitimate replacement for the United States empire we seek to disempower. Even now, as we continue to demand an immediate end to the war, we must emphasize the need for the UN, not the Pentagon, to take charge of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

§ We are engaged now in building a global movement for peace and justice in a new kind of world—and we need a new global strategy that builds on but goes way beyond strategies to address security threats to people in the United States.

PHYLLIS BENNIS AND JOHN CAVANAGH

Phyllis Bennis is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies and author of Before & After: U.S. Foreign Policy and the September 11th Crisis *(Interlink). John Cavanagh is IPS director and co-author of* Alternatives to Economic Globalization: Another World Is Possible *(Berrett-Koehler).*

RESPONSE 2: Today Iraq, Tomorrow...?

The war is just two weeks old, yet the Bush Administration has accomplished the unprecedented isolation of the United States worldwide, even from several of its historic allies. This is not a matter of poor public relations but the result of widespread opposition to US foreign policy objectives. For the masses in the streets, this illegal and aggressive war defies credibility.

The right is now trying to twist patriotism into a hammer against the antiwar movement, and I think Cortright is too cautious in his response. We must continue the pressure to end the fighting,

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and insist that opposition to this war does not reflect a failure to support the US troops but the opposite: We support them by calling for their immediate return home.

By far the biggest challenge for the antiwar movement will be to expand our horizons to oppose the full measure of the Bush Administration's new National Security Strategy. That Saddam Hussein's regime is so unpopular in Iraq and around the world has made implementing the first stages of this preemptive war doctrine easier. While the Administration clearly hopes that a successful invasion and occupation of Iraq will allow it to reshape regimes elsewhere, the US antiwar movement must connect the madness and immorality of the current invasion with this Administration's new doctrine of empire. With all this in mind, the US antiwar movement needs to advance the following program:

§ Immediate cessation of hostilities: Despite the fatalism being promoted by the media, the antiwar movement must insist that the Anglo-American invasion cease and that the UN be reintroduced as a peacemaking body.

§ Oppose empire-building and fight for a democratic foreign policy: US aggression did not begin, nor will it end, with the invasion of Iraq. The antiwar movement must take on, directly, the Bush Administration's National Security Strategy. We must advance an alternative vision of the relationship of the United States to the rest of the world, not just because it will be safer and less costly, but because it is right.

§ Remove weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East: Cortright says correctly that "disarmament ultimately must be universal," but neglects to explicitly mention Israel, which has undisclosed numbers and types of WMD. Steps need to be taken to make the Middle East a zone free of such weapons.

§ Support for Palestinian self-determination: Peace will never emerge in the Middle East without the Palestinian people gaining their national rights and security. As long as the Israeli government is permitted to continue the occupation of Palestinian land and to suppress the Palestinian movement, the seeds of future terrorism and destabilization will be fertilized.

§ Continue to broaden the antiwar movement: The Iraq war and the "war against terrorism" are being used to advance an extreme right-wing agenda. Domestic repression is on the increase, an antiworker economic strategy is being used to strangle the public sector and public services while strengthening the military, and the demonization of Arabs, Muslims and Central Asians has become commonplace. The antiwar movement must increase its reach in order to tackle these issues. At the same time we must expand the movement so that it is far more reflective of the diverse progressive social movements in the United States, particularly within communities of color. BILL FLETCHER JR.

Bill Fletcher Jr. is the president of TransAfrica Forum, a co-chair of United for Peace and Justice, and a founder of the Black Radical Congress. He can be reached at bfletcher@transafricaforum.org.

RESPONSE 3: Toward a Global Movement

I find David Cortright's call useful but limiting. The most exciting aspect of the antiwar organizing has been its global reach. While in the anticorporate globalization movement we had already formed impressive ties with grassroots movements overseas, antiwar organizing has given us the opportunity to expand geographically to areas such as the Middle East, where we had less-developed contacts; to multiply our ranks with a dazzling array of new sectors, from city councils to women's and civil rights organizations such as NOW and the NAACP; and, most important, to merge the peace movement with the movement to fight corporate-dominated globalization.

How do we build on this momentum? Organize, organize, organize. Let's organize more World Social Forums where we gather physically to meet and strategize. Let's send grassroots teams to the world's hot spots—North and South Korea, Iran, Syria—to link up with appropriate local and regional groups to prevent the next war, instead of sending human shields at the eleventh hour. Let's start a global campaign to democratize the UN by giving power to the General Assembly instead of the Security Council. Let's channel the bursting anti-American sentiment overseas into targeted boycotts against corporations profiting from war. Let's launch global, grassroots campaigns to get the United States to sign on to international treaties and institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol. Working with local communities where US troops are based, let's start a Bring All the Troops Home campaign to stop the expansion of US bases and start dismantling some of the hundreds of existing bases overseas.

Here at home, our greatest challenge is to make sure that our antiwar coalitions don't fall apart after the immediate crisis ends. This will involve linking opposition to the war to urgent domestic crises: teaming up with folks fighting service cuts to oppose the way military spending robs our schools, hospitals and housing programs; making common cause with immigrant and ethnic groups that have found themselves under attack in the wake of September 11; and working together with libertarians and conservatives to counter the erosion of our civil liberties.

And while Cortright is right that we must organize to get Bush out of power in 2004, let's realize that the two-party system is not working, that the Democratic leadership has blood on its hands for sanctioning this war and that we must build a multiparty system—opening the space for truly progressive parties such as the Greens—for democracy to take root in this country.

The past six months of frenetic organizing have taught us that we are indeed a formidable global force. It is through strengthening this global movement for peace and justice—a movement never before seen—that we can bring about sweeping changes in who makes decisions for our global community and in whose interests those decisions are made. It is through flexing the muscle of the new superpower—world public opinion—that we can, in the long term, challenge the dominant corporate and military powers that dragged us into this bloody war. MEDEA BENJAMIN

Medea Benjamin is the founding director of Global Exchange and a cofounder of the women's antiwar group Code Pink.

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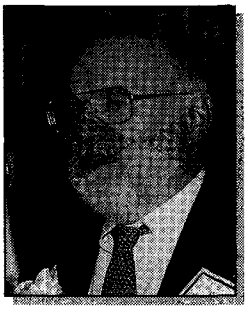

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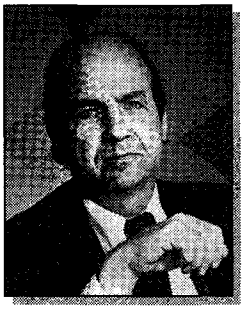

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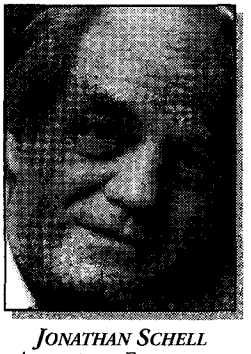

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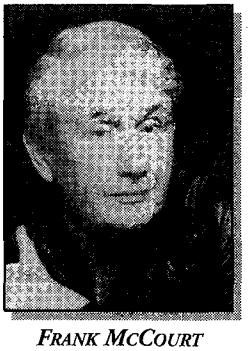

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Dec. 9	Tue	Belize Ciy, Belize	8:00AM	6:00PM
Dec. 10	Wed	Santo Tomas de Castilla, Guatemala	6:00AM	6:00PM
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Dec. 12	Fri	Day at Sea		
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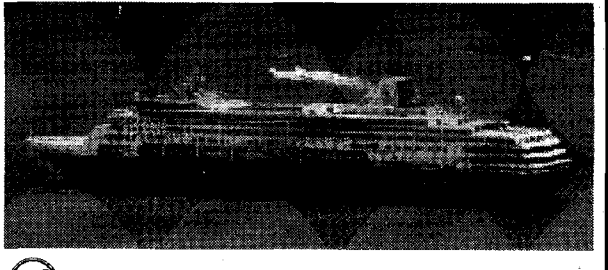

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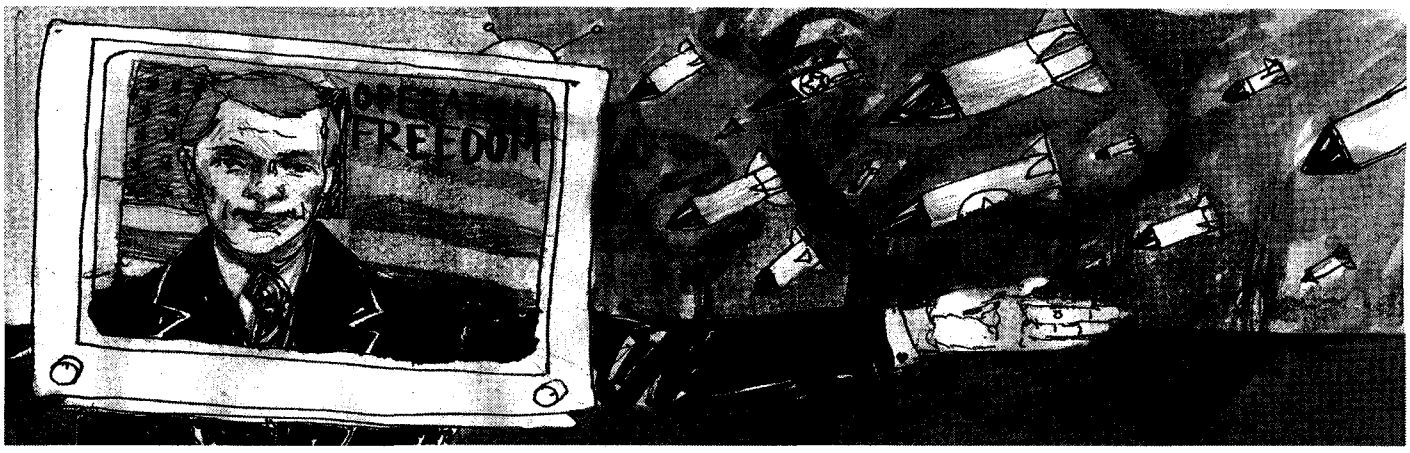

JOHN COPELAND

The Press and the Myths of War

CHRIS HEDGES

In wartime the press is always part of the problem. This has been true since the Crimean War, when William Howard Russell wrote his account of the charge of the Light Brigade and invented the profession of the modern war correspondent. When the nation goes to war, the press goes to war with it. The blather on CNN or Fox or MSNBC is part of a long and sad tradition.

The narrative we are fed about war by the state, the entertainment industry and the press is a myth. And this myth is seductive. It empowers and ennobles us. It boosts rating and sells newspapers—William Randolph Hearst owed his fortune to it. It allows us to suspend individual conscience, maybe even consciousness, for the cause. And few of us are immune. Indeed, social critics who normally excoriate the established order, and who also long for acceptance and acclaim, are some of the most susceptible. It is what led a mind as great as Freud's to back, at least at its inception, the folly of World War I. The contagion of war, of the siren call of the nation, is so strong that most cannot resist.

War is where I have spent most of my adult life. I began covering the insurgencies in El Salvador, where I spent five years, then went to Guatemala and Nicaragua and Colombia, through the first intifada in the West Bank and Gaza, the civil wars in Sudan and Yemen, the uprisings in Algeria and the Punjab, the fall of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, the Gulf War, the Kurdish rebellions in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, the war in Bosnia, and finally Kosovo. I have been in ambushes on desolate stretches of Central American roads, shot at in the marshes of southern Iraq, imprisoned in Sudan, beaten by Saudi military police, deported from Libya and Iran, captured and held prisoner for a week by the Iraqi Republican Guard during the Shiite rebellion following the Gulf War, strafed by MIG-21s in Bosnia, fired upon by Serb snipers and shelled for days in Sarajevo with deafening rounds of heavy artillery that threw out thousands of deadly bits of iron fragments. I have painful memories that lie buried and untouched most of the time. It is never easy when they surface.

War itself is venal, dirty, confusing and perhaps the most potent narcotic invented by humankind. Modern industrial warfare means that most of those who are killed never see their attackers. There is nothing glorious or gallant about it. If we saw what wounds did to bodies, how killing is far more like butchering an animal than the clean and neat Hollywood deaths on the screen, it would turn our stomachs. If we saw how war turns young people into intoxicated killers, how it gives soldiers a license to destroy not only things but other human beings, and if we saw the perverse thrill such destruction brings, we would be horrified and frightened. If we understood that combat is often a constant battle with a consuming fear we have perhaps never known, a battle that we often lose, we would find the abstract words of war—glory, honor and patriotism—not only hollow but obscene. If we saw the deep psychological scars of slaughter, the way it maims and stunts those who participate in war for the rest of their lives, we would keep our children away. Indeed, it would be hard to wage war.

For war, when we confront it truthfully, exposes the darkness within all of us. This darkness shatters the illusions many of us hold not only about the human race but about ourselves. Few of us confront our own capacity for evil, but this is especially true in wartime. And even those who engage in combat are afterward given cups from the River Lethe to forget. And with each swallow they imbibe the myth of war. For the myth makes war palatable. It gives war a logic and sanctity it does not possess. It saves us from peering into the darkest recesses of our own hearts. And this is why we like it. It is why we clamor for myth. The myth is enjoyable, and the press, as is true in every nation that goes to war, is only too happy to oblige. They dish it up and we ask for more.

Chris Hedges, the author of War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning *(PublicAffairs), writes the "Public Lives" column for the* New York Times.

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War as myth begins with blind patriotism, which is always thinly veiled self-glorification. We exalt ourselves, our goodness, our decency, our humanity, and in that self-exaltation we denigrate the other. The flip side of nationalism is racism—look at the jokes we tell about the French. It feels great. War as myth allows us to suspend judgment and personal morality for the contagion of the crowd. War means we do not face death alone. We face it as a group. And death is easier to bear because of this. We jettison all the moral precepts we have about the murder of innocent civilians, including children, and dismiss atrocities of war as the regrettable cost of battle. As I write this article, hundreds of thousands of innocent people, including children and the elderly, are trapped inside the city of Basra in southern Iraq—a city I know well—without clean drinking water. Many will die. But we seem, because we imbibe the myth of war, unconcerned with the suffering of others.

Yet, at the same time, we hold up our own victims. These crowds of silent dead—our soldiers who made "the supreme sacrifice" and our innocents who were killed in the crimes against humanity that took place on 9/11—are trotted out to sanctify the cause and our employment of indiscriminate violence. To question the cause is to defile the dead. Our dead count. Their dead do not. We endow our victims, like our cause, with righteousness. And this righteousness gives us the moral justification to commit murder. It is an old story.

In wartime we feel a comradeship that, for many of us, makes us feel that for the first time we belong to the nation and the group. We are fooled into thinking that in wartime social inequalities have been obliterated. We are fooled into feeling that, because of the threat, we care about others and others care about us in new and powerful waves of emotion. We are giddy. We mistake this for friendship. It is not. Comradeship, the kind that comes to us in wartime, is about the suppression of self-awareness, self-possession. All is laid at the feet of the god of war. And the cost of this comradeship, certainly for soldiers, is self-sacrifice, self-annihilation. In wartime we become necrophiliacs.

The coverage of war by the press has one consistent and pernicious theme—the worship of our weapons and our military might. Retired officers, breathless reporters, somber news anchors, can barely hold back their excitement, which is perverse and—frankly, to those who do not delight in watching us obliterate other human beings—disgusting. We are folding in on ourselves, losing touch with the outside world, shredding our own humanity and turning war into entertainment and a way to empower ourselves as a nation and individuals. And none of us are untainted. It is the dirty thrill people used to get from watching a public execution. We are hangmen. And the excitement we feel is in direct proportion to the rage and anger we generate around the globe. We will pay for every bomb we drop on Iraq.

"The first casualty when war comes," Senator Hiram Johnson said in 1917, "is truth."

The reasons for war are hidden from public view. We do not speak about the extension of American empire but democracy and ridding the world of terrorists—read "evil"—along with weapons of mass destruction. We do not speak of the huge corporate interests that stand to gain even as poor young boys from Alabama, who joined the Army because this was the only

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way to get health insurance and a steady job, bleed to death along the Euphrates. We do not speak of the lies that have been told to us in the past by this Administration—for example, the lie that Iraq was on the way to building a nuclear bomb. We have been rendered deaf and dumb. And when we awake, it will be too late, certainly too late to save the dead, theirs and ours.

The embedding of several hundred journalists in military units does not diminish the lie. These journalists do not have access to their own transportation. They depend on the military for everything, from food to a place to sleep. They look to the soldiers around them for protection. When they feel the fear of hostile fire, they identify and seek to protect those who protect them. They become part of the team. It is a natural reaction. I have felt it.

But in that experience, these journalists become participants in the war effort. They want to do their bit. And their bit is the dissemination of myth, the myth used to justify war and boost the morale of the soldiers and civilians. The lie in wartime is almost always the lie of omission. The blunders by our generals—whom the mythmakers always portray as heroes—along with the rank corruption and perversion, are masked from public view. The intoxication of killing, the mutilation of enemy dead, the murder of civilians and the fact that war is not about what they claim is ignored. But in wartime don't look to the press, or most of it, for truth. The press has another purpose.

Perhaps this is not conscious. I doubt the journalists filing the hollow reports from Iraq, in which there are images but rarely any content, are aware of how they are being manipulated. They, like everyone else, believe. But when they look back they will find that war is always about betrayal. It is about betrayal of the young by the old, of soldiers by politicians and of idealists by the cynical men who wield power, the ones who rarely pay the cost of war. We pay that cost. And we will pay it again. ■

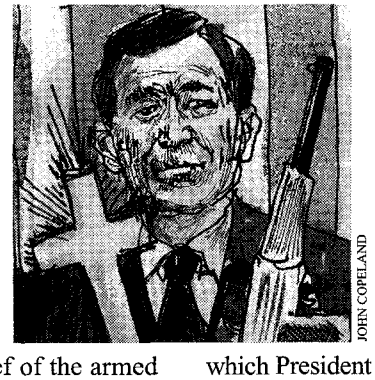
BUSH'S MOTIVES HAVE MORE TO DO WITH EMPIRE AND PROFIT THAN WITH LIBERATING IRAQ.

The Reason Why

GEORGE McGOVERN

Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson
"The Charge of the Light Brigade"
(in the Crimean War)



JOHN COPELAND

Thanks to the most crudely partisan decision in the history of the Supreme Court, the nation has been given a President of painfully limited wisdom and compassion and lacking any sense of the nation's true greatness. Appearing to enjoy his role as Commander in Chief of the armed forces above all other functions of his office, and unchecked by a seemingly timid Congress, a compliant Supreme Court, a largely subservient press and a corrupt corporate plutocracy, George W. Bush has set the nation on a course for one-man rule.

He treads carelessly on the Bill of Rights, the United Nations and international law while creating a costly but largely useless new federal bureaucracy loosely called "Homeland Security." Meanwhile, such fundamental building blocks of national security as full employment and a strong labor movement are of no concern. The nearly $1.5 trillion tax giveaway, largely for the further enrichment of those already rich, will have to be made up by cutting government services and shifting a larger share of the tax burden to workers and the elderly. This President and his advisers know well how to get us involved in imperial crusades abroad while pillaging the ordinary American at home. The same families who are exploited by a rich man's government find their sons and daughters being called to war, as they were in Vietnam—but not the sons of the rich and well connected. (Let me note that the son of South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson is now on duty in the Persian Gulf. He did not use his obvious political connections to avoid military service, nor did his father seek exemptions for his son. That goes well with me, with my fellow South Dakotans and with every fair-minded American.)

The invasion of Iraq and other costly wars now being planned in secret are fattening the ever-growing military-industrial complex of which President Eisenhower warned in his great farewell address. War profits are booming, as is the case in all wars. While young Americans die, profits go up. But our economy is not booming, and our stock market is not booming. Our wages and incomes are not booming. While waging a war against Iraq, the Bush Administration is waging another war against the well-being of America.

Following the 9/11 tragedy at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the entire world was united in sympathy and support for America. But thanks to the arrogant unilateralism, the bullying and the clumsy, unimaginative diplomacy of Washington, Bush converted a world of support into a world united against us, with the exception of Tony Blair and one or two others. My fellow South Dakotan, Tom Daschle, the US Senate Democratic leader, has well described the collapse of American diplomacy during the Bush Administration. For this he has been savaged by the Bush propaganda machine. For their part, the House of Representatives has censured the French by changing the name of french fries on the house dining room menu to freedom fries. Does this mean our almost sacred Statue of Liberty—a gift from France—will now have to be demolished? And will we have to give up the French kiss? What a cruel blow to romance.

George McGovern, a former senator from South Dakota, was the 1972 Democratic nominee for President.

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Office of National Drug Control Policy. 'Monitoring the Future study, December 2002. University of Michigan

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During his presidential campaign Bush cried, "I'm a uniter, not a divider." As one critic put it, "He's got that right. He's united the entire world against him." In his brusque, go-it-alone approach to Congress, the UN and countless nations big and small, Bush seemed to be saying, "Go with us if you will, but we're going to war with a small desert kingdom that has done us no harm, whether you like it or not." This is a good line for the macho business. But it flies in the face of Jefferson's phrase, "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind." As I have watched America's moral and political standing in the world fade as the globe's inhabitants view the senseless and immoral bombing of ancient, historic Baghdad, I think often of another Jefferson observation during an earlier bad time in the nation's history: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

The President frequently confides to individuals and friendly audiences that he is guided by God's hand. But if God guided him into an invasion of Iraq, He sent a different message to the Pope, the Conference of Catholic Bishops, the mainline Protestant National Council of Churches and many distinguished rabbis—all of whom believe the invasion and bombardment of Iraq is against God's will. In all due respect, I suspect that Karl Rove, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice—and other sideline warriors—are the gods (or goddesses) reaching the ear of our President.

I believed [with Vietnam] as I do now that the best way to support our troops is to avoid sending them on mistaken military campaigns...

As a World War II bomber pilot, I was always troubled by the title of a then-popular book, *God Is My Co-pilot*. My co-pilot was Bill Rounds of Wichita, Kansas, who was anything but godly, but he was a skillful pilot, and he helped me bring our B-24 Liberator through thirty-five combat missions over the most heavily defended targets in Europe. I give thanks to God for our survival, but somehow I could never quite picture God sitting at the controls of a bomber or squinting through a bombsight deciding which of his creatures should survive and which should die. It did not simplify matters theologically when Sam Adams, my navigator—and easily the godliest man on my ten-member crew—was killed in action early in the war. He was planning to become a clergyman at war's end.

Of course, my dear mother went to her grave believing that her prayers brought her son safely home. Maybe they did. But how could I explain that to the mother of my close friend, Eddie Kendall, who prayed with equal fervor for her son's safe return? Eddie was torn in half by a blast of shrapnel during the Battle of the Bulge—dead at age 19, during the opening days of the battle—the best baseball player and pheasant hunter I knew.

I most certainly do not see God at work in the slaughter and destruction now unfolding in Iraq or in the war plans now being developed for additional American invasions of other lands. The hand of the Devil? Perhaps. But how can I suggest that a fellow Methodist with a good Methodist wife is getting guidance from the Devil? I don't want to get too self-righteous about all of this. After all, I have passed the 80 mark, so I don't want to set the bar of acceptable behavior too high lest I fail to meet the standard for a passing grade on Judgment Day. I've already got a long list of strikes against me. So President Bush, forgive me if I've been too tough on you. But I must tell you, Mr. President, you are the greatest threat to American troops. Only you can put our young people in harm's way in a needless war. Only you can weaken America's good name and influence in world affairs.

We hear much talk these days, as we did during the Vietnam War, of "supporting our troops." Like most Americans, I have always supported our troops, and I have always believed we had the best fighting forces in the world—with the possible exception of the Vietnamese, who were fortified by their hunger for national independence, whereas we placed our troops in the impossible position of opposing an independent Vietnam, albeit a Communist one. But I believed then as I do now that the best way to support our troops is to avoid sending them on mistaken military campaigns that needlessly endanger their lives and limbs. That is what went on in Vietnam for nearly thirty years—first as we financed the French in their failing effort to regain control of their colonial empire in Southeast Asia, 1946–54, and then for the next twenty years as we sought unsuccessfully to stop the Vietnamese independence struggle led by Ho Chi Minh and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap—two great men whom we should have accepted as the legitimate leaders of Vietnam at the end of World War II. I should add that Ho and his men were our allies against the Japanese in World War II. Some of my fellow pilots who were shot down by Japanese gunners over Vietnam were brought safely back to American lines by Ho's guerrilla forces.

During the long years of my opposition to that war, including a presidential campaign dedicated to ending the American involvement, I said in a moment of disgust: "I'm sick and tired of old men dreaming up wars in which young men do the dying." That terrible American blunder, in which 58,000 of our bravest young men died, and many times that number were crippled physically or psychologically, also cost the lives of some 2 million Vietnamese as well as a similar number of Cambodians and Laotians, in addition to laying waste most of Indochina—its villages, fields, trees and waterways; its schools, churches, markets and hospitals.

I had thought after that horrible tragedy—sold to the American people by our policy-makers as a mission of freedom and mercy—that we never again would carry out a needless, ill-conceived invasion of another country that had done us no harm and posed no threat to our security. I was wrong in that assumption.

The President and his team, building on the trauma of 9/11, have falsely linked Saddam Hussein's Iraq to that tragedy and then falsely built him up as a deadly threat to America and to world peace. These falsehoods are rejected by the UN and nearly all of the world's people. We will, of course, win the war with Iraq. But what of the question raised in the Bible that both George Bush and I read: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul," or the soul of his nation?

It has been argued that the Iraqi leader is hiding a few weapons of mass destruction, which we and eight other countries have long held. But can it be assumed that he would insure his incineration by attacking the United States? Can it be assumed that if we are to save ourselves we must strike Iraq before Iraq strikes us? This same reasoning was frequently employed during the half-century

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of cold war by hotheads recommending that we atomize the Soviet Union and China before they atomize us. Courtesy of *The New Yorker*, we are reminded of Tolstoy's observation: "What an immense mass of evil must result...from allowing men to assume the right of anticipating what may happen." Or again, consider the words of Lord Stanmore, who concluded after the suicidal charge of the Light Brigade that it was "undertaken to resist an attack that was never threatened and probably never contemplated." The symphony of falsehood orchestrated by the Bush team has been devised to defeat an Iraqi onslaught that "was never threatened and probably never comtemplated."

I'm grateful to *The Nation*, as I was to *Harper's*, for giving me opportunities to write about these matters. Major newspapers, especially the *Washington Post*, haven't been nearly as receptive.

The destruction of Baghdad has a special poignancy for many of us. In my fourth-grade geography class under a superb teacher, Miss Wagner, I was first introduced to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the palm trees and dates, the kayaks plying the rivers, camel caravans and desert oases, the Arabian Nights, *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* (my first movie), the ancient city of Baghdad, Mesopotamia, the Fertile Crescent. This was the first class in elementary school that fired my imagination. Those wondrous images have stayed with me for more than seventy years. And it now troubles me to hear of America's bombs, missiles and military machines ravishing the cradle of civilization.

But in God's good time, perhaps this most ancient of civilizations can be redeemed. My prayer is that most of our soldiers and most of the long-suffering people of Iraq will survive this war after it has joined the historical march of folly that is man's inhumanity to man. ■

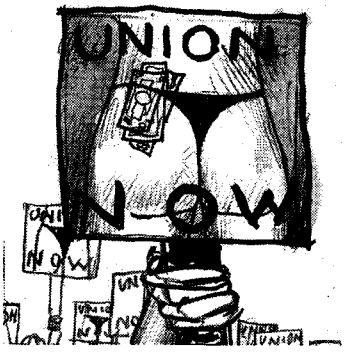
LED BY A FORMER BOEING MACHINIST, LAS VEGAS EXOTIC DANCERS ARE TALKING UNION.

The Naked and the Red

MARC COOPER

Las Vegas

A specter haunts Las Vegas: organized strippers. Behind this nightmare vision lurks Andrea Hackett, a former male factory-worker turned nude dancer. And the headlines Hackett's been making have nothing to do with her sex change. Here in Glitter Gulch that raises no more eyebrows than, say, a PTA president's divorce in Peoria.



JOHN COPELAND

No. Hackett's been the talk of the town because the lanky, blond-streaked 49-year-old with a spectacular set of enameled fingernails has been frenetically trying to organize Vegas's thousands of strippers and nude dancers, launching them into a head-on battle royal against local government—and indirectly against the all-powerful corporate gambling interests that dominate this city's political life. "They wanted a fight," she says, unpacking a file of organizational charts and strategy notes. "And now I'm giving it to them."

This unusually colorful episode of open class warfare erupted last summer when the Clark County commissioners voted 5 to 1 to heavily regulate the stripping and lap dancing that bring millions of tourists and conventioneers and many more of their dollars annually into Vegas's thirty-six "gentlemen's clubs" and provide income for 15,000 women dancers. (No one knows for sure, but the guess is that something like a million lap dances a year are performed in Vegas clubs at twenty-five bucks a pop or more.)

Like a Church Lady skit straight out of *SNL*, the county commissioners took a hands-on approach—excuse the pun—to defining what would now become a legal or illegal lap dance. In brief, a dancer would no longer be able to sit on a customer's genital area—i.e., his lap—more or less rendering the very essence of the dance impotent. Dancers could no longer solicit tips. Customers could offer them but were specifically barred from any longer performing the traditional gesture of placing currency in dancers' G-strings. "This was a declaration of war," Hackett huffs. "In short, they were outlawing lap dancing."

Before her sex-change operation in 1995, Hackett spent seventeen years working for Boeing in Seattle as a machinist and union activist. Now she drew upon her previous organizing experience to fight back. "I know I'm the only nude dancer in Vegas who went to Woodstock and who burned her draft card," she says. And for good measure, she adds, "I'm also a socialist."

Within days of the bill's passage, Hackett founded the Las Vegas Dancers Alliance, and by the end of the summer she had signed up nearly a thousand members. She now has "club reps"—sort of clandestine shop stewards—in about two-thirds of the dance establishments, and they are signing up about twenty-five new members a week. In addition to holding regular organizing meetings at the local library, Hackett's LVDA published a "Dancers Voter Guide" for the November 2002 election and conducted the first known voter-registration drive in history of nude and lap dancers. "We registered almost 500 new voters among the girls," she says proudly.

The LVDA has affiliated unofficially with almost fifty other groups, including the Sierra Club and the northern Nevada NAACP, that make up the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN), and Hackett has forged a close working relationship with the local ACLU. "She's got the energy of ten organizers

Marc Cooper, a Nation *contributing editor, is currently finishing a book on Las Vegas, to be published in the fall by Nation Books.*

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When *The Nation* is available in high school libraries, reports a survey conducted by School Library Media Quarterly, it is one of the top dozen magazines actually used by students. Unfortunately, in more than three libraries out of four—both public and high school libraries—*The Nation* is not available. The reasons? Everything from budget cuts to the "discretion" of the school board or librarian. The remedy? *The Nation*'s **ADOPT-A-LIBRARY** program. For just $29.97 (42% off our regular subscription rate) you can put a full year's issues of *The Nation* into an institution on our own "high priority" list—libraries where we feel *The Nation's* presence could make the most profound difference—ranging from inner-city high schools to one of the three libraries in Crawford, Texas, home to George W. Bush's rustic ranch.

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and the skills to go along with it," says Paul Brown, southern Nevada director of PLAN. "The County Commission has set off a spark that has turned into a firestorm. This basically comes down to an important issue of labor practices." In the past few weeks Hackett has also met with state AFL-CIO officials and other union activists exploring affiliation. "Do we want to become a union?" she asks and then answers her own query. "Let's just say that all roads are leading to the same conclusion." One organizer for a major international industrial union who met with Hackett says his organization is looking seriously into some form of collaboration. "We'd love to have these dancers eventually in our union, and we're going to help out every way we can," he says.

Hackett and other local political observers agree that the crackdown on lap dancing can be traced to the economic squeeze the big Vegas casinos and hotels have been feeling since 2000. Business is only down 2–4 percent, but that's an ice-cold shower for an industry that has been spoiled by two decades of uninterrupted growth and profitability. To jack up the inflow of tourists, many of the casino resorts have been turning to racier floor shows, but they are still prohibited by state regulation from mixing gambling with strip or lap dancing. In the past few weeks all of America has been exposed to a new, sexually suggestive, multimillion-dollar TV ad campaign run by Vegas gambling and hotel interests promising "What happens here, stays here." Meanwhile, the mega-lit billboards atop the giant Vegas hotels are filled more and more with explicitly sexual lures.

The lap-dance clubs near the big hotels commit the cardinal sin of drawing guests off these resort properties and out of the casinos and pricey restaurants. And some of these clubs are very big businesses in themselves. The newly opened Sapphire Gentleman's Club is a $25 million investment that draws upon a pool of 6,000 dancers. In short, it seems the casinos have been using their political clout to shut down competition from the dance clubs. "This is life in the post-9/11 economic environment," says Hackett, sounding very much like a union economist. "It's all about the corporations shifting their revenue and profit stream away from gaming." Traditionally, the corporate owners of Vegas have made 60–70 percent of their profits from gambling and the rest from lodging, food and entertainment. But at the recent "American Gaming Summit," the CEO of the powerhouse MGM Mirage boasted of how his corporation has managed to invert that formula.

Not everyone agrees with Hackett that the big casinos are the lone motivating force behind the lap-dance suppression. "No question that in the end this is about economics," says Gary Peck, executive director of the Nevada ACLU. But Peck thinks the pressure might also be coming from some of the bigger, politically connected dance clubs trying to squeeze out the smaller ones. He also argues that some of the county commissioners behind the ordinance have a less than healthy view of sex. "It's very difficult for me to delve into the heads of that crowd," he says with a laugh. "But I can certainly tell you they are obsessed with sex!" Of his alliance with Hackett, Peck says: "She's working with women who are working people and whose business is protected by the First Amendment. And that is where our interests and concerns coincide."

Hackett, meanwhile, has found fertile organizing territory

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among the dancers, who have also been feeling the economic pinch of the past two years. While in the salad days of the dot.com bubble a top dancer could count on maybe forty to fifty lap dances a night at $25 each, today she is lucky to do ten. "You might think that's a lot of money either way," says Hackett. "But we are exploited by everybody." Vegas's exotic dancers are treated as "independent contractors" by club owners, meaning not only are they not on the payroll, thus receiving no benefits or insurance, but they have to pay the owners as much as $70 a night just for the right to perform. Then there are payoffs to the bouncers, the deejays and sometimes even to the parking valets. And whatever money is generated by the dancers has to be split with the club owners, sometimes on a 50-50 basis.

The non-employee status of the dancers may eventually thwart unionization efforts, but in that case the LVDA could still exert influence as a "professional organization," perhaps on the model of the National Writers Union. The alliance is also close to concluding a deal with an insurance carrier so that dancer-members would be able to purchase healthcare at group rates. Once that deal is concluded, alliance membership could soar.

LVDA can already claim some partial victories. Vigorous lobbying, a few rallies and marches downtown, and oodles of local and even international publicity forced partial reversal of last summer's near-total ban on lap dancing. Some weeks ago Clark County officials amended the ordinance so that G-string tipping would once again be allowed. Hackett's group has also convinced local county and city officials to put on the back burner proposals to impose a stiff registration and licensing tax on individual dancers. Nevertheless, there's been a marked increase in arrests and ticketing of dancers since last summer's law went into effect. "All that law has done is turn us into criminals," says Hackett. So she's moving ahead with a new project: sponsoring a countywide measure, known as the Protection of Dancing Initiative, that will impose standardized regulation of the industry and reverse the more draconian aspects of the recent legislation. "Call it Christmas for dancers," says Hackett. To qualify these measures for the ballot, thousands of voter signatures will have to be gathered in the next few months. Hackett is confident. "We've already lined up squads of volunteer signature gatherers," she says mischievously. "And they are all hardbodies," she says, using the industry term that refers to the youngest dancers, usually 18–21 years old. "Now you tell me, honey," she says, "you think anyone walking the streets of Vegas is gonna say no to these girls?"

The signature campaign is now getting under way. But even before that, Hackett and her hard-core group of about fifty activists were already working around the clock, leafleting the dance clubs for new members, shopping around for union affiliation and plotting out the initiative campaign.

By night Hackett is still dancing at the Deja Vu Showgirls club. By day she is putting the finishing touches on what she's calling her own "Politics of Dancing" educational course—designed, she says, to offer a quick political education to the average apolitical 19-year-old nude dancer. Hackett has already written a first primer. Skimming through the 7,500-word pamphlet, it's clear that the enforcers of decency at the County Commission and the casino interests behind them have taken on a formidable opponent. Hackett closes by saying she hopes her work can "help solidify the great natural allies of the American left and begin to heal the wounds inflicted by our natural enemies on the American right...the first basic facts to remember are these: There are far less rich people than poor people. And the rich generally want things to stay the way they are. The poor, by their very nature, want things to change, hopefully for the better."

Hackett has recently started working with a nucleus of nude dancers in Texas who are trying to organize. And eventually, she says, she'd like to have a national organization. "I've already got the name figured out. The United States Dancers Alliance. Or USDA," she says with a laugh, slapping her flank. "Get it?" ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

making known their objections to the war. On September 26, the *New York Times* ran an ad on the op-ed page by thirty-three respected scholars on international relations. It listed a host of solid, mainstream reasons why war was short on benefits and long on costs. A number of the signers were well-known: Barry Posen appears now and again on TV in Boston on military affairs, and Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer have written op-eds for major newspapers.

The *Times* ad might have been a watershed event. But the professors did not start an organization, call a press conference or even have the text of the ad on a website. When I e-mailed Walt to get a copy, the only version he could send had been scanned into a computer and was useless for any search engine. If I had not put the original and a transcription on my website, it might still not be on the Internet. Don't knock the musicians too much: The PhDs still have a lot to learn. TIM FRANCIS-WRIGHT

WAR ON THE PERLE

Placentia, Calif.

■ Yesterday I received the April 7 *Nation*, and read Eric Alterman's "Perle, Interrupted," on Seymour Hersh's exposé of Richard Perle. Imagine my surprise and delight to hear today that he's resigned! Amen and Alleluia! Bravo, Mr. Alterman! GABRIELLA KOLIAS

NAME THAT WAR!

Bloomington, Ind.

■ Those Pentagon sobriquets like Operation Iraqi Freedom are noble and inspiring but a little misleading. So, as a patriotic professional writer, I'm volunteering a few more appropriate to our unprovoked invasion: Operation Thunderous Pretaliation, Operation Altruistic Armageddon, Operation Perle Harbor, Operation Gratuitous Violence... Join in! Let's have a jolly Name-the-War Contest to take our minds off the dead and maimed. JAMES ALEXANDER THOM

WAR FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Hamilton, Mont.

■ The March 31 issue arrived just in time to save me from a terminal psychotic episode. Steve Brodner's inspired illustration on the inside cover was a signal that this was to be no ordinary *Nation* fix. John Nichols's "Building Cities for Peace" gave this Montanan, immersed in a largely meanspirited right-wing community, reason to hope; and Wallace Shawn's "Fragments From a Diary" were magnificent. Now, if I can just hold out until the next copy arrives... TED KERSTETTER

AND NOW, THE *CORRECT* DATE...

■ In our March 31 "*Nation* Notes" item on the Fox News ads that have twice run in the magazine, we suggested rereading Daphne Eviatar's "Murdoch's Fox News: They Distort, They Decide." It appeared in the March 12, 2001, issue.

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COMMENT

The Doha Follies

Doha, Qatar

Of the more than 700 journalists who have registered with the CentCom Coalition Media Center here, two have emerged as celebrities. One is Omar al-Issawi, the suave, gregarious, goateed correspondent for Al Jazeera TV. At two separate briefings, his network was dressed down by military officers (one American, the other British) upset over its airing of clips showing POWs being interrogated and soldiers lying in pools of blood. The attacks struck most journalists here as entirely unwarranted, and they served mainly to enhance the Qatar-based network's reputation for aggressiveness. Al-Issawi, who speaks excellent English, has been repeatedly sought out for interviews, and he has appeared on *Larry King Live* more than once.

The other star has been Michael Wolff, media critic for *New York* magazine. Brash and persistent, Wolff stood up at one of the afternoon sessions and challenged the presiding officer, Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, to explain why the hundreds of journalists who had come to Qatar to report on the war should stay, so useless and barren of information were the briefings. His comments were greeted with applause, and for days afterward journalists approached him to thank him for giving voice to what they all had been thinking. Getting hold of a clip of Wolff's remarks, Rush Limbaugh played it on the air, then gave out Wolff's e-mail address and urged listeners to vent their displeasure. More than 3,000 messages poured into Wolff's inbox, accusing him of being unpatriotic, antimilitary and worse.

Yet even Limbaugh's listeners, had they sat through the daily presentations on the sleek CentCom set, would no doubt have been dismayed by the level of distortion, obfuscation and misinformation served up to them. Journalists—expecting the type of slick news management for which the Bush Administration has become famous—have been astounded by the amateurish nature of the press operation here. It's not just the lack of hard information that's troubled them but the crude efforts at manipulation. Most briefings begin with the showing of several videos of "precision" bombing that seem recycled from Gulf War I. When a short clip was aired showing US soldiers being greeted by two waving children, a journalist from Chinese state television sitting next to me snorted, "What propaganda!" (And he should know.) With each passing day, the labels applied to the Iraqi irregulars who have been harassing US troops became more lurid. They were "armed thugs," then "terroristic behaving paramilitaries," then "terrorist-like cells" and finally, "death squads" (this from Gen. Tommy Franks). Nicole Winfield, an AP correspondent, stood up to note that the term "terrorist" is generally applied to those who seek to kill civilians, not soldiers. Franks brushed her off.

A correspondent for a European newspaper told me he regarded the information coming from the Americans as no more dependable than that from the Iraqis. "The Americans have been so restrictive with information that they're hurting their own cause," he said.

Despite the transparent efforts to spin them, American TV correspondents have, for the most part, saluted smartly. Watching the row of TV monitors in the main working area of the press center, I've seen reporters for CNN, MSNBC and Fox dutifully appear on screen and relay almost verbatim the blather they've just been handed. One network correspondent told me that she was worried about how hard she could push the generals at the briefings—they might stop calling on her. Reports on such British outlets as the BBC and Sky, by contrast, tend to offer more analysis and less nationalism. "We're very conscious that our listeners are not just a coalition audience but an international one, and that affects our tone, style and terminology," says Jonathan Marcus, a BBC defense correspondent.

The Brits here have benefited from the presence of British press officers who have been more forthcoming than their US counterparts. The head of the British detachment, Simon Wren, is an out-of-shape, chain-smoking rogue in sneakers who has developed a good rapport with the dozen or so Fleet Street hacks here, and they can often be spotted gathered around him, trying to extract nuggets of info while Wren in turn tries to woo them.

Unfortunately, Wren usually gets the better of the encounter. In fact, the British flacks have used their facade of congeniality and cooperation to spread some of the most blatant falsifications of the campaign. A good example is the much-heralded Basra "uprising." This supposed popular revolt against the ruling Baath party was broadly touted by journalists during the first week of the war, feeding notions that the Shiites of the south were preparing to rise up against the regime and greet the invading force as liberators, as advertised.

But the uprising never amounted to much. In fact, it may never have occurred. It originated with a report by an embedded British journalist who said he saw Iraqi troops firing on restive Basra residents. This report was then fanned by Wren and his crew into a full-fledged insurrection. And the British reporters here—eager for any tidbit that might give them an edge—gleefully ran with the story. Now they confess that they were had.

What has really been happening in Basra remains a mystery. Only Al Jazeera has a correspondent there, and he is subject to tight control by his minders. When Saddam Hussein is gone, the long-suffering residents of Basra may very well embrace the Western forces, but it serves no one to spread false stories about what's going on there. Yet too many such stories are coming out of this press center. And while the briefers and spinners deserve some of the blame, the press itself—ready to swallow whatever is fed it—does too.

MICHAEL MASSING

Michael Massing is a Columbia Journalism Review *contributing editor.*

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB: Michael Klare argues that at no point in modern American history has the civilian leadership of the nation's military establishment come under as much criticism from serving officers as in the current war in Iraq; Tim Shorrock examines the conflict-ridden business dealings of key members of Donald Rumsfeld's advisory group, the Defense Policy Board; Alfred Ross and Lee Cokorinos highlight the dangers to diversity from the Administration effort to overturn the 1978 *Bakke* decision (www.thenation.com).

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Diversity and Its Malcontents

Even as the idea is publicly celebrated, affirmative action is in trouble with the voters.

DAVID L. KIRP

In the early 1990s the trustees of the Boston Aquarium belatedly awoke to the realization that almost everyone at the museum—staff, volunteers and visitors alike—was white. The museum needed to reflect the diversity of the city, the trustees decided, and it was especially important to attract the black community. But those good intentions didn't readily translate into practice. While free "Terrific Thursdays" were supposed to boost the aquarium's appeal, the message never got out, and the only people to benefit from the deal were the regulars. Most of the museum's energy went into recruiting black teenagers as paid interns, but for a host of reasons that scheme failed. The museum had no training program for its new recruits. The staff wasn't prepared to mentor them; staff members mostly bit their tongues when the new recruits messed up. For their part, the interns had no special passion for aquatic life. They had been recruited at the last minute by a government summer job program and assigned, willy-nilly, to the aquarium. They weren't prepared to fold T-shirts or answer over and over, with infinite patience and plastered smiles, the same questions about the shark tank. These adolescents might have been pulled in by real work, but in the name of diversity the museum put a black face on a social problem.

These days, diversity belongs on the motherhood-and-apple-pie list of things everyone favors—or at least pays lip service to. Beyond the precincts of the kooky right, there is none of the ethnocentric rhetoric so common during the debate over the 1965 Immigration Act, which changed the demographics of America, and no interest in returning to a "Europeans first" immigration regime. From the rhetoric of the party platforms, it would be hard to tell the Democrats from the GOP in the 2000 election. Only Pat Buchanan's wing of the Reform Party made a direct appeal to xenophobia, and he received just 0.5 percent of the vote. When President Bush announced that his Administration would file a brief opposing the University of Michigan's affirmative action admissions policy in the lawsuit now before the Supreme Court, the President insisted that while he opposed racial "quotas," he embraced diversity. For its part, the university could claim the support of a veritable Who's Who of the American Establishment, with sixty-four briefs in support of affirmative action signed by more than 300 parties, including many Fortune 500 companies as well as twenty-one retired generals and admirals.

Rhetoric is one thing, though, and reality something quite different. Even as the idea of diversity is publicly celebrated, affirmative action is in trouble with the voters as well as the judges, as a number of states (led by California, the most Democratic state in the Union) have adopted anti–affirmative action ballot measures. The right-wing research centers and law firms whose well-coordinated efforts are meticulously documented in Lee Cokorinos's *The Assault on Diversity* are part of the explanation. These outfits know their market. Instead of attacking affirmative action directly, they spin the issue, coming out against "reverse discrimination" or "liberal bias." And rather than putting a white face up front, they turn to minority spokespersons like Ward Connerly and Linda Chavez, who present themselves as the true champions of civil rights—advocates for what Chavez, cynically borrowing a famous Supreme Court dictum that helped keep segregation alive for a generation, calls

David L. Kirp, professor of public policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, was the founding director of the Harvard Center for Law and Education. He has chronicled the Mount Laurel, New Jersey, history in Almost Home: America's Love-Hate Relationship with Community *(Princeton).*

THE ASSAULT ON DIVERSITY: An Organized Challenge to Racial and Gender Justice.
By Lee Cokorinos.
Rowman and Littlefield.
188 pp. $26.95.

DIVERSITY IN AMERICA: Keeping Government at a Safe Distance.
By Peter H. Schuck.
Harvard.
437 pp. $35.

THE MINORITY RIGHTS REVOLUTION.
By John Skrentny.
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There's even a smoking gun in Cokorinos's account, a 1971 memorandum written by future Justice Lewis Powell to the Chamber of Commerce titled "Attack on American Free Enterprise System." Don't whine about the rights revolution, which was then at its apogee, Powell wrote to the business leaders. Instead, "launch scholars and speakers," engage in "constant surveillance of the media" and, most critical, go where the action is—politics and the courts. "The judiciary may be the most important instrument of social, economic and political change." *The Assault on Diversity* situates all the present-day right-wing power centers in a diagram that in its intricacy looks like the plans for a complex engineering project.

Right-wing organizations have pulled off an intellectual putsch, Cokorinos argues. They've gulled Americans into believing that for women and minorities, there's really no longer any need to provide compensation for past discrimination, nor a compelling social interest in diversity—that justice requires not "special treatment" but color- and gender-blindness. The populace, however, wasn't duped into resisting diversity by coercion. It never was given a good reason to think otherwise.

As John Skrentny carefully documents in *The Minority Rights Revolution*, the transformation of the legal and policy landscape that occurred between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s came about with remarkably little public discussion. While for generations African-Americans fought for equality, after the 1964 Civil Rights Act other groups, including the ill-defined one labeled Hispanics, essentially piggy-backed on their efforts. (Discrimination on the basis of sex was added to that legislation by a conservative Southern congressman in an effort to kill the measure by ridicule.) These new "official minorities," Skrentny points out, were immeasurably helped by sympathetic judges and responsive bureaucrats, many of whom had been leaders of civil rights groups.

This was America's version of the "velvet revolution" in Eastern Europe. What Richard Nixon's Labor Department called the Philadelphia Plan, the "goals and timetables" rules devised to make all-white labor unions end their outright discrimination, became the affirmative action template for all minorities. And those standards, developed for the workplace, were adopted with almost no debate by elite universities, which were suddenly eager to include more non-white faces in their promotional materials. "By the numbers" also became the rule in public school desegregation. To achieve "racial balance," cartographers drew attendance-zone boundaries that made as much on-the-ground sense as the borders that European powers inflicted on their former African colonies.

But these were deceptively easy victories, Skrentny points out, purchased at the price of enduring resentment. The advocates (and as someone who helped design the legal strategies, I number myself in this group) never laid the political groundwork for affirmative action. As director of the national Center for Law and Education, I co-wrote a 1970 report with the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund called "It's Not the Busing, It's the Niggers." That title was a quote from some Southern redneck. But it wasn't just a taste for discrimination that led white families to rebel when the buses came around, and it wasn't only racists who were unhappy at the prospect of their children spending two or three hours on a bus every day to satisfy a judge's order.

Times have changed. The left is now much less effective than the opposition in making its case, as the liberal think tanks and public-interest law firms have sadly receded into obscurity. Diversity has been stripped of its richness and turned into the liberal code-word for affirmative action—by the numbers if that's politically feasible; or else through indirect expedients like assuring top students from the state's worst high schools entree into top public universities and taking students' life experiences into account in admissions decisions. I strongly support such expedients for pragmatic reasons; as a professor who teaches a course on race, ethnicity and public policy, I daily see students from widely varying backgrounds teaching one another in ways that no reading assignment could hope to accomplish. Still, those who aren't in the know are entitled to much more candor—the frank acknowledgment, for instance, that the University of California's discussion of whether to discontinue using the SAT in admissions decisions, while entirely defensible on its merits, is mainly driven by the desire to increase the enrollment of blacks and Latinos, even at the expense of whites and Asians with better paper qualifications.

The next time I teach the race and ethnicity course, I'll make a point of assigning Peter Schuck's *Diversity in America*. Most of my students will hate it, since, rather than preaching to the choir, as *The Assault on Diversity* does, it tests some of the left's most cherished beliefs.

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Some will dismiss *Diversity in America* as a footnote-laden apologia for the conservative cause garbed in full Establishment regalia—a Yale law professor being published by Harvard. But Schuck isn't Chavez or Connerly, and his arguments need to be engaged. It's essential to begin thinking beyond the model of a generation ago, which assumes that the force of law rather than an appeal to what Schuck calls "genuineness" is the best way to manage diversity.

How diverse a society are we? More than almost any other country, Schuck reminds us, more than we've ever been, and ever-more diverse because of the continuing influx of Third World immigrants. And there's no turning back. From Spain to Sri Lanka, most countries regard "the claim that diversity is a social virtue as subversive, if not suicidal, nonsense." But Americans increasingly embrace diversity, the pollsters report, which is why Atlanta Braves pitcher John Rocker's widely publicized crack—that taking the Number 7 subway through the multiethnic stew of Queens is like "riding through Beirut"—made him the target of such derision a few years back.

Still, as *Diversity in America* acknowledges, it's hardly "Kumbaya" by the campfire. Our embrace of differentness is a wary, contextual and complex matter. Even as we watch Japanese cooking shows, work alongside Indian programmers and eat at Nuevo Latino restaurants, the mushrooming of gated communities and the flight to homogeneous charter schools illustrate what might politely be termed our ambivalence. "We like the idea of diversity more," says Schuck, "the less we have to *live* with it." The deliciously incorrect Dame Edna, taking note of who tends the gardens of Beverly Hills and picks the Vidalia onions in Georgia, puts the point more sharply: America is living proof that a democracy can still have slaves with a clear conscience.

"The central question," says Schuck, "is whether American society can successfully thread the needle socially and politically. Can it knit these disparate identities seamlessly and effectively enough to satisfy both the affective needs of parochial communities and the civic needs of the larger polities in which they are embedded?" The key is how diversity is managed, and here's where the controversy heats up. Schuck argues for less government—more precisely, for a government that does less to discourage self-chosen diversity, fewer rules that make people associate with those they don't like, greater reliance on voluntarism, quieter and less visible official intervention. Carrots rather than sticks; honey and not vinegar; choice above all: This, *Diversity in America* insists, is how to thread the needle.

Much of the book is an examination of how this messy principle might work in practice, as Schuck examines bilingual education, affirmative action and residential integration policy. Sometimes his argument is plain wrong. He contends, for instance, that private, but not public, universities should be allowed to admit students on the basis of race. Public institutions, as agents of the state, can't be color conscious—a nearly all-white Yale would assumedly be intolerable to Schuck, while a nearly all-Asian-and-white Berkeley might not trouble him. But this public-private distinction is artificial. Private universities depend on government loans for student aid; public universities, which now get less than a third of their funding from the states, rely increasingly on private money to keep running. One rule for all: The outcome of the Michigan affirmative action case will inevitably set the standard for admissions at Columbia.

In general, Schuck's analyses are provocative and complex. Consider his approach to the vexed question of suburban integration. For thirty years, the poor black residents of Mount Laurel, New Jersey, fought for affordable housing in their home town. The principle they advanced, which was embraced by the New Jersey Supreme Court in a series of landmark rulings, emphasized class rather than race: Every community must accept its "fair share" of the burden of housing the poor. I spent half a decade chronicling those efforts to achieve simple justice. Peter Schuck devotes eight pages to trashing them.

The ethical premise of Schuck's argument is deeply troubling. While racial discrimination is intolerable, he asserts, "classism is not only descriptive but normative as well; in a capitalist society it seems like the natural order of things. Government has no business inserting people who have not climbed the ladder in the customary neighborhood they cannot afford." Yet as it turns out, Schuck doesn't really buy his own argument. He favors residential integration achieved on the QT, through housing vouchers—boosts up that "ladder" with public funds—that tenants can use to negotiate with landlords. Perhaps poor families wouldn't have wound up living in Mount Laurel, which prohibited the construction of apartments, but they would have a better opportunity to live in decent housing, most likely in more diverse neighborhoods than where they'd been living.

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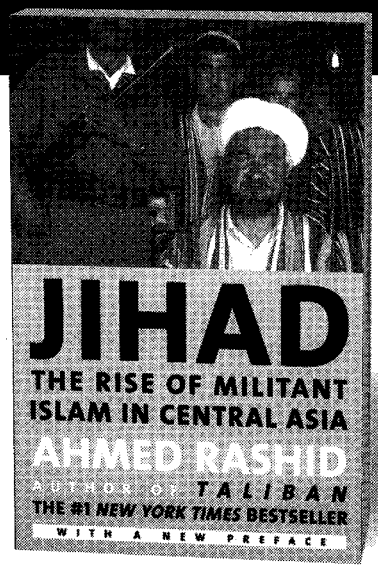
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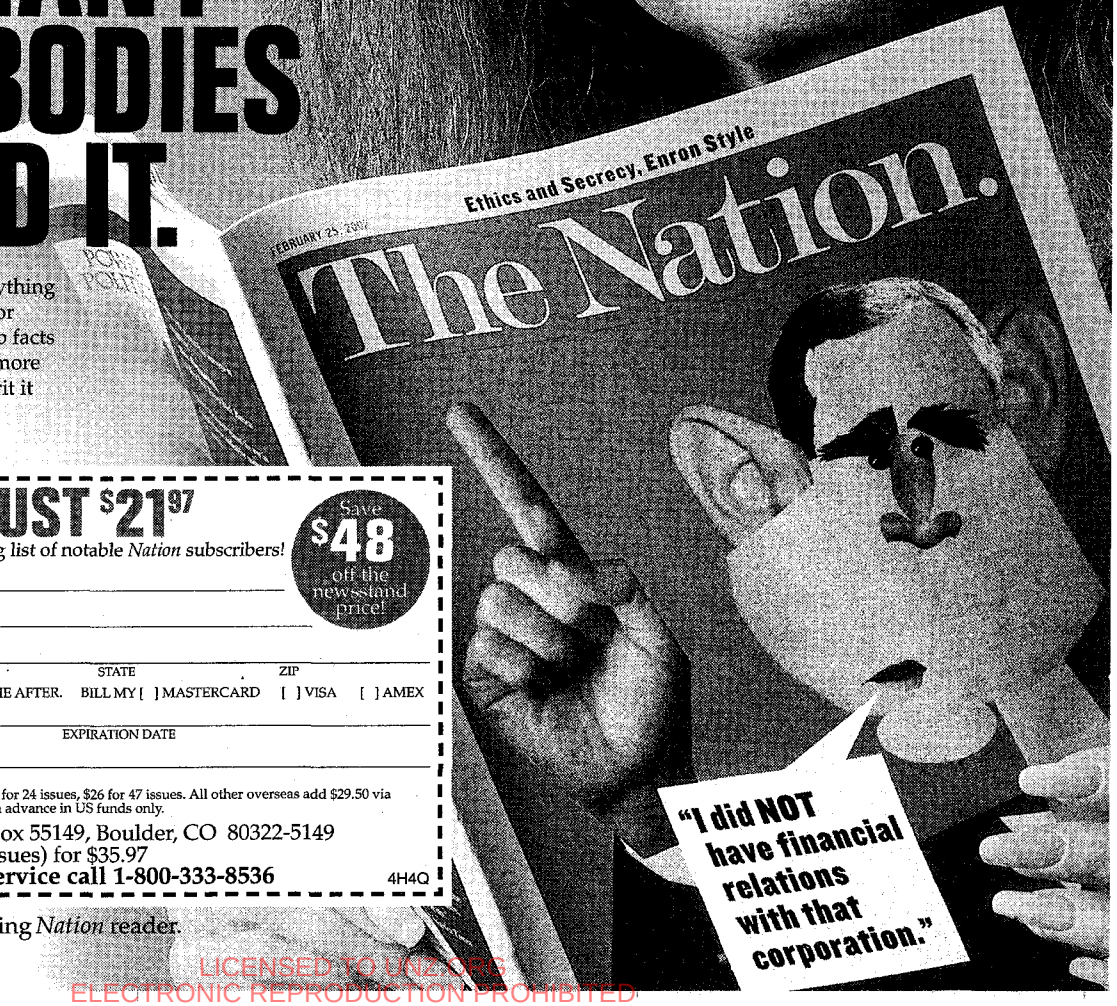

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Is that fair? Some years ago, in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, NYU law professor Derrick Bell advanced a Swiftian proposal: Let businesses that want to discriminate buy licenses to do so, and distribute the fees to African-Americans victimized by the discrimination. After all, Bell argued, tongue only partly in cheek, the bigots were going to discriminate anyway; why not let blacks get something out of it?

If racist (or classist) suburbs had the option of buying their way out of their responsibilities to the commonwealth, would black and poor families really be better off? Mount Laurel's taxpayers spent over $1 million fighting the court's decree, and it wasn't until 2001, thirty years after the lawsuit was filed, that the first affordable housing units were built in that town. Across New Jersey fewer than 30,000 such units have been constructed because of the decision, most of them occupied by the twentysomething children and the sixtysomething parents of suburban homeowners. In a state where, during the 1990s, as many as 30,000 units of market-rate housing were being constructed each year, fewer than 2,000 low-income housing units have been built because of this decree. In Yonkers, New York, another celebrated case discussed by Schuck, a federal judge ordered that both public housing and public schools be integrated. The principle—securing nondiscrimination—is certainly right. But in Yonkers, as in Mount Laurel, the resistance was fierce and the results have been modest. As a pragmatic matter, it's hard to dispute Schuck's conclusion that a less adversarial approach would achieve more, in terms of concrete housing opportunities.

Not just in housing but across the social landscape, Schuck argues, "diversity's value to people depends on its perceived genuineness and lack of legal contrivance"—its "provenance." That's a bitter pill for a veteran of the civil rights wars to swallow. But the accumulated evidence of increased racial segregation in suburbs and schools, despite decades of litigation, as well as ceaseless resistance to other government initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, suggests that sometimes it's best to do good by stealth. Initiatives that are more freely chosen and less visible—reliance on civil society with a nudge, rather than a clout, from government—may achieve more enduring diversity than government can bring about on its own. That's the nub of the argument in *Diversity in America*, and it's a proposition that no one who thinks hard about diversity—not as a slogan but as something of value—can afford to ignore. ■

Bloomsburied in China

PATRICIA LAURENCE

K: The Art of Love. By Hong Ying.
Translated by Henry Zhau and Nicky Harman. Marion Boyars. 252 pp. Paper $14.95.

A divide exists between Chinese literature and movies written, produced, read or viewed in the West, and those written and produced in mainlaind China. Witness the controversy surrounding the publication of Ha Jin's *Waiting* and the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Gao Xingjian (author of *Soul Mountain* and *One Man's Bible*)—works produced by Chinese expatriates living in America and France. Or note the Chinese objection to the banning of Zhang Yimou's films in China and their popularity in America. Mainland Chinese critics and readers often accuse expatriate artists of pandering to Western values and politics or "orientalizing" images of China.

This divide with a new twist is revealed again in a sensational libel case against Hong Ying's new novel, *K: The Art of Love*, which has played itself out in mainland Chinese courts over the past year. Hong Ying, an expatriate author now living in England, fled China after the Tiananmen violence of 1989, a turning point in Chinese political and cultural life. She is just the kind of writer America and England love to love and China loves to hate. She has had what the Chinese call "the curse" of an interesting life, beginning with her early years of poverty in Chongquing, a depressing river town as revealed in her moving autobiography, *Daughter of the River*.

Hong Ying appeared in the Changchun, Manchuria, court (where the periodical *Writer* is published) last fall to face allegations that her novel *K* slandered the reputation of Ling Shuhua (1900–90) and Chen Yuan, well-known intellectuals and writers in the Republican period. Chen Xiaoying, the daughter of the couple, also living in London, objected to fictionalized pornographic descriptions of her mother engaged in Daoist sex rituals with Julian Bell. In listserv discussions, Hong Ying has denied the charge, asserting that Lin (thus fictionalizing Ling) is a composite character. She contends that all she wanted to express in the novel is that "Woman is not by nature passive in sex."

Some of the book's best-written passages, if we can judge from translation, are Hong Ying's sensuous descriptions, her articulation of desire in that Chinese bed now spinning in international fictional space. If there is a dominant, surrealist image in Hong Ying's book, it is this bed, "a bed that seemed to have expanded to fill the universe, to be actually moving in space." It is what happens out of bed, or in the minds and cultures of the protagonists, that remains, unfortunately, opaque in her novel. If fiction's focus is this development of the inner life of characters (as opposed to history and biography, which describe another reality), it is here where this novel fails.

Erotic pop fiction like Hong Ying's finds a market both in China (mainland and Taiwan) and abroad. In 2001 Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby* was banned in China, and 40,000 copies were burned because of its eroticism. In fact, a "banned in China" blurb is often the best advertisement for sales in the United States. Predictable polarities are set up in Wei Hui's novel as in Hong Ying's: East-West lovers; love versus desire; impotent-potent. Both novels tout sensationalized sex with Western men as female liberation. In Wei Hui's novel, Coco (after Chanel) is involved with Tian Tian, her impotent artist soulmate, but passionately drawn to Mark, a sexy, married German businessman. It became an international bestseller when the rights were sold in nineteen countries. Japan alone printed 200,000 copies. Similarly, *K* had large sales when it was first published in Chinese in Taiwan in 1999; when parts of it were serialized in the mainland periodical *Writer* and a digest in *Sichuan Youth Daily*; when Dutch and Swedish editions appeared in 2000; and when it was published in the United States in 2002.

Fredric Jameson has posited that Chinese works may more often reveal a "national allegory," writers longing to articulate repressed and interwoven personal and national desires and dreams. This brings us back to the politics of reading. It's possible that the Chinese may be socialized into

Patricia Laurence recently completed Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China, *to be published by the University of South Carolina Press in September.*

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reading allegorically, unlike the American reader. In the 1920s, in some stories like Yu Dafu's "Sinking," the Chinese male is portrayed as impotent, mirroring China's political powerlessness against foreign powers. In the puritanical culture of China (which still survives, in some respects), where sex was rarely discussed openly and affection rarely displayed publicly, the protagonist of Yu Dafu's story cries out, "What I want is love./If there were a beautiful woman who understood my suffering, I would be willing to die for her.... For what I want is love from the opposite sex." His despair over his inability to find and enjoy love and sex while living in Japan parallels his own "sinking" feeling about China, then prey to aggressive foreign countries (Germany, France, Russia, England and Japan) and subject to unequal treaties. The perceived humiliation of the Chinese nation by foreign powers is projected into literary images of weak Chinese men.

This despair over the "sinking" of desire and China reverberates in Ha Jin's prize-winning novel *Waiting*. Here too we can read a "national allegory" that interferes in the fulfillment of desire, but it is not a foreign force or country. It is the Chinese state in the figure of a provincial judge who controls the desire of Lin Kong. Lin Kong is bound to an illiterate woman in an arranged marriage (representing old China), and because of the state's punishing marriage and divorce laws, is unable to marry the "city girl," Manna, whom he passionately desires. He waits for eighteen years.

What, then, is the national allegory for *K* and *Shanghai Baby*, novels written by the "beauties" of the Deng Xiaoping era? These are novels about gender and politics: female desire, weak Chinese men and sexual power plays with foreign men. The women break their cultural and "mind-forg'd manacles," as Blake called them—the traditional image of Chinese feminine passivity—to realize their erotic desires. Some might say these authors represent the new liberated youth of China, who are drawn to the West and rescue the Chinese novel from puritanism and the party censors; others will charge them with clichéd sentiment and imagery and cultural backpedaling.

Hong Ying acknowledges in the foreword to her novel that it is based on a "true story" of the romance of Julian Bell, nephew of Virginia Woolf and son of Vanessa Bell, and Lin (Ling Shuhua), a writer of romantic stories. This romance, documented in letters and diaries, actually did take place in China in the mid-1930s, between Julian Bell, poet and activist, and Ling Shuhua, a writer and painter who was the daughter of the mayor of Beijing and the wife of Chen Yuan, a prominent historian and literary critic. It was a mercurial relationship, and when the affair was discovered by the gentlemanly husband, Bell's academic dean, Bell left Wuhan in a cloud of scandal. He then joined the ambulance corps of a British Medical Unit in the Spanish Civil War, against the protestations of his mother and Bloomsbury friends. He died in Fuencarral, north of Madrid, days after his arrival, at the age of 29. *K* embellishes upon the lives of Julian Bell, Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Clive Bell, as well as Ling Shuhua and Chen Yuan, all the while mixing "facts" and "fiction."

This isn't the first time that Chen Xiaoying's famous parents have been misrepresented. How familiar, we wonder, are Chinese readers with the history that Hong Ying embroiders upon in her fiction, against those who have distorted the reputations of Chen Xiaoying's parents in China for political and allegorical purposes in past decades? Their reputations waxed and waned during the Republican period; they were vilified for their association with the Crescent Moon group, Western liberalism, English tastes and literature, and the Nationalist cause. Ancestry law in China, unlike America, prohibits defamation of the dead. The Supreme People's Court has issued explicit stipulations that the reputation of the deceased and their blood relatives is protected against libel for three generations. Chen Xiaoying demanded that the presses be stopped. She also asked for 200,000 yuan ($24,000) in damages and a public apology from Hong Ying for slandering her parents in the guise of fiction. On December 3 a Manchurian court ruled that Hong Ying had "[violated] the reputation of the plaintiff's ancestors." Now *K* cannot be published in any form in China, film-rights negotiations must be suspended and Hong Ying has been ordered to pay 140,000 yuan (about $18,000) to Chen Xiaoying for "spiritual consolation" and financial damages.

This blurring of genres is familiar to American readers accustomed to the fictional work of Philip Roth and others, and the new "biographies" such as *Dutch*, by Edmund Morris. Morris dramatizes Ronald Reagan's life and leaves the reader to sort out the facts. The reader of *K* is left with the same dilemma. Hong Ying, however, defensively writes in her foreword:

> I was, after all, aiming to write a novel not a biography. It was my prerogative as a novelist to use my imagination in devel-

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oping the story from its historical basis and my tale does not claim to be a factual account of the lives of the two lovers.

Hong Ying tries to have it both ways. Though the foreword to the novel is presented as fact, it is a tissue of inaccuracies. Ling Shuhua was on the margins of the Crescent Moon group, a loose association of literary friends, not a "member" of a formal literary "New Moon Society." Also, Julian Bell did not believe that "Oriental women were all docile sweetness." In his letters to his mother, he describes Ling Shuhua, for example, as "subtle, sensitive, very complicated—also torn between an introspective and analytic part," and "at once self-possessed, sure of her world and devilish." Here history is more interesting than Hong Ying's fictional stereotypes. In addition, Hong Ying hides her scholarly sources in claiming "no one else had drawn the two halves of this story together."

Despite all this cultural spin in England and China, *K* comes off as a pat treatment of East-West romance, never quite living up to the psychological and cultural dimensions of the historical relationship. Though Hong Ying denies it in her foreword, Julian Bell is indeed presented as a "cartoon imperialist," riding in a rickshaw upon arrival in Wuhan, observing the desperate poverty around while arrogantly announcing "that he had seen more poverty in London's East End." The chief protagonist, Lin—whose romantic writings Hong Ying announces she admires—becomes a stereotype seductress with secret knowledge of the Daoist arts of love. Lin, "a witch in bed," practices these arts upon the hapless Englishman, reduced to moaning about becoming a "sex toy." Experiencing multiple orgasms, vowing to learn to "rein back the white ox," he vows to measure up to this "Chinese bluestocking." Near the end of their affair, Lin takes Julian to the folkloric opium house for a *ménage à trois*, and here she throws off her last sexual inhibitions. The facts of the actual relationship were less sensational on this point, though. In one of the letters that Julian actually wrote to his friend Eddy Playfair, he described Ling Shuhua as an "admirable mistress," but he said, "on the whole I shouldn't put her very high in bed; on the other hand, she's so charming out of it that I don't mind."

As if the real Bloomsburian antics weren't enough, Hong Ying's erotic imagination extends further into the Bloomsbury cast. In one passage, Julian says that "when his mother was pregnant with him, his father, Clive Bell, had a relationship with Aunt Virginia. After his birth,

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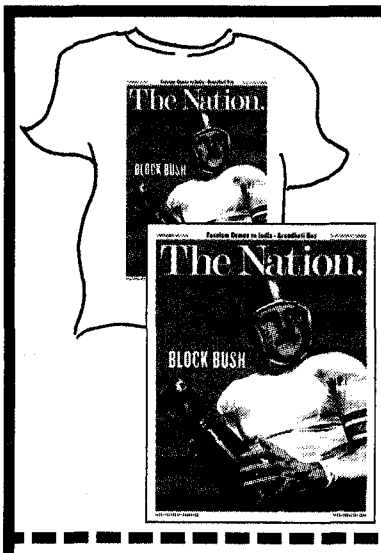

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Mother took Roger Fry as her lover, encouraging his father to pursue her women friends." Virginia Woolf had a flirtation, perhaps, with Clive Bell, as suggested in letters, but it is sensationalism that transforms it into a full-blown affair in the novel. Hong Ying lifts other episodes straight from Bloomsbury letters and diaries, as when Lytton Strachey walked boldly into a room and pointed to a spot on Vanessa Bell's dress, asking, "Semen?" At another point, she recounts the plot of Ling Shuhua's autobiography, *Ancient Melodies*, and remains discreet about her sources. And so Bloomsbury glitter, immorality and bashing now travel to China as a model of liberalism or, perhaps, barbarism.

In Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay, in his professional ambitions, gets to the letter "R," having longed for "Z"; in this novel, Julian Bell gets to *K* (number eleven), assigning letters of the alphabet to his sexual conquests. The book is a transparent reaction to Chinese puritanism and censoring of sex in novels. Even the cover of the book, an embroidered golden "K" overlaid on a nude female body, has traces of Hester Prynne's "A." And the language is, at times, breathlessly and laughably Harlequin: "Duncan loved to paint male models in erotic positions, sometimes a few of them together in acrobatic sexual poses, with Mother [Vanessa Bell] watching appreciatively." At another point, Lin's "fox fur coat slid to the floor with a rushing whisper."

The house of fiction has a million windows, Henry James wrote, but in China, the windows have long been shaded by the Writers' Union, the literary agents of the Communist government. We begin to see more through these windows than just sexually liberated Chinese nymphets romping with Westerners in the bedroom, as in Hong Ying's *K*. One longs for more translations of stories like Li Rui's *Silver City*, a sprawling novel that takes us from the intrigues and struggles of the Li and Bai clans during the pre-Communist 1920s to the Communist takeover, and then up to the Cultural Revolution. Or tales like Wang Anyi's *Lapse of Time*, quiet and probing portraits of the inner lives of people enduring the adversity and sadness of China's tumultuous history, such as the Cultural Revolution or times when people went nearly mad from hunger. Nevertheless, now that the book has become a commodity in Chinese culture, commercial glimmerings on the mainland and abroad—like Hong Ying's *K*—begin to illuminate the many windows that will develop in the house of Chinese fiction. ■

Dangerous Liaisons

JOSEPH McELROY

ONE MAN'S BIBLE. By Gao Xingjian. Translated by Mabel Lee. HarperCollins. 450 pp. $26.95.

He says he is not a fighter—or rather, the narrator says it; he's "an onlooker," someone who steps aside, "frail," "not the savior of the world," not a "prophet," speaking only to himself, living "his own insignificant life," "the epitome of ordinariness," and not even a dissident after all this. If the world is the will to power and we ourselves are this will, as Nietzsche puts it, what are we to make of the will not to have power? To somehow not extend whatever it is—idea, point of view, ethos. Is it to be believed? Is it denial, and if so, of what?

It is a position of leadership that the young narrator of Gao Xingjian's novel, *One Man's Bible*, briefly seizes during the early, most terrible and confusing period of the Cultural Revolution in Beijing. He takes the floor at a meeting of a rebel faction to speak decisively against certain Red Guards and end a stalemate. An ambiguous impulse, we learn, but overnight he is a leader drawn further in. He is looked up to as a writer employed in a Communist Party editorial office, but he is more at risk than he knows. This would seem to be 1967, when Mao Zedong's radical purification purges had unofficially unleashed wholesale violence against "intellectuals," party members, any or all of those targeted in antisocialist categories that were accepted unquestioningly by that time.

In the streets, thousands were beaten to death, driven to suicide, in homicidal rage of the young against their elders. But not against Mao, revered by millions of "youngsters, waving the...little red book," who would assemble hours ahead of time in Tiananmen Square to see him pass by in his jeep, "hot tears streaming down their faces...shouting 'long live'.... [t]hen... [going] home to smash...everything that was old—...schools...temples..." At explosive meetings behind closed doors we hear the narrator excoriate those who used blacklists to drive the discredited to their deaths. Yet his power has raised his profile. He is about to come under investigation. He has long known that party policy contaminates the truth. Every night posters go up attacking someone new.

The narrator was "crazy" in those days, he says. Around him are people who have lost their own voice. Never a convinced activist, he gives up this game in order to protect himself. Become anonymous—like the people who appear and disappear whose stories fill this novel about survival. Survival of what? An office co-worker gets a phone call that her husband has gassed himself. Without a word she tidies her desk and goes home to write up a poster separating herself by making clear that her husband has "cut himself off from both the people and the Party." Elsewhere, the narrator's colleague Liu sees himself instantly isolated by a poster condemning him as a renegade profiteer who has protected his reactionary father. It can happen to anyone. The narrator, who often seems damaged, wakes at dawn the next day and looks out the window at the roof tiles: He himself is "probably...a concealed enemy" and to survive will "have to wear a mask."

It seems so even today to the traveler in mainland China. Custom? Self-censoring that continues? How well I recall those healthy workers looking out at me from posters of a traveling exhibition at a Warsaw gallery in the cold war Poland of 1966. Art direct from Red China at the threshold of another great plunge forward, the Cultural Revolution decade. Posters of pink-cheeked peasants, single-minded soldiers, as I recall, young women and men. Pictures that spoke as plainly as the words that were safe to speak in China—to explain this work of reconstruction, re-education, willed change, commune unity, to say nothing of manifold repression and want that those poster paintings translated into strength and interchangeable banality. Wordless, yet not unlike the indicting posters pasted up day and night in *One Man's Bible*, shouting vengeance upon Ox Demon, Snake Spirit, "black gang" elements (the educated, in effect) or "offspring of dogs" (if the family background

Joseph McElroy's new novel, Actress in the House, *will be published this month by Overlook Press.*

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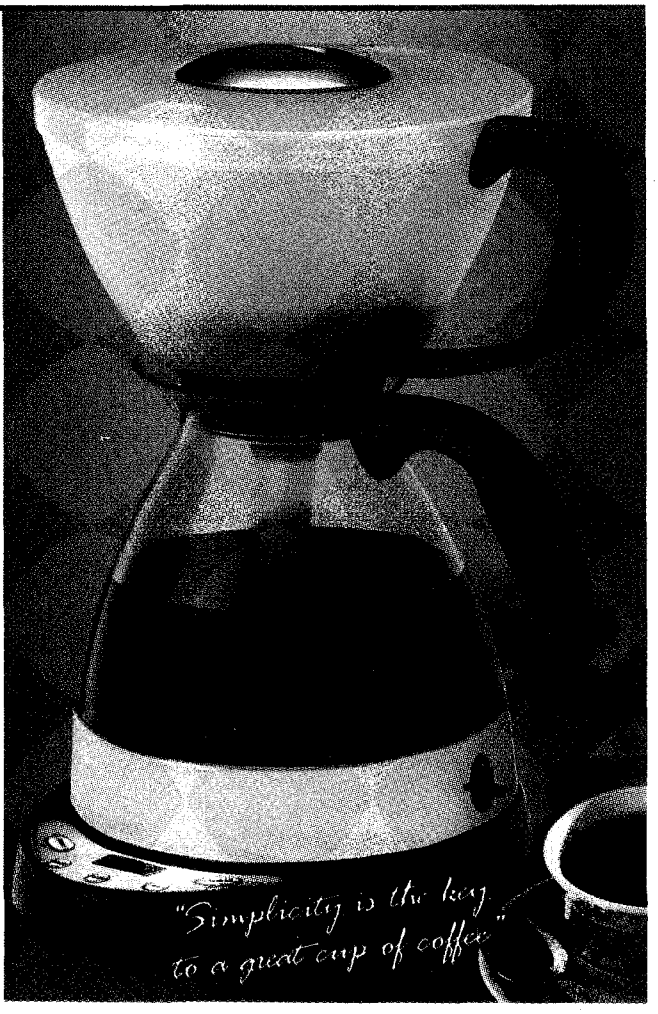

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EVENTS

NEW YORK

Public Forum

■ "Civil Liberties in a Time of War," a public forum, will include distinguished guests from New York to speak about the uneasy relationship between civil liberties and national security. Presented by the New York Society for Ethical Culture on Thursday, April 10, at 7 PM, 2 West 64th Street at Central Park West. Free admission, open to the public. Question-and-answer period to follow. Participants include James Comey, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Norman Siegel, former executive director, New York Civil Liberties Union; Professor Randolph Jonakait, New York Law School; and Ryan Sager, editorial writer, the *New York Sun*. Khoren Arisian, senior leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture, will serve as the moderator. Ethical Culture is a nondenominational humanistic religion inspired by the ideal that the supreme aim of human life is working to create a more humane society. Founded in 1876, the New York Society for Ethical Culture is a community bound together by a belief in the worth and dignity of each person and a commitment to help create a better world. For further information contact 212-874-5210, ext. 113, or visit www.nysec.org.

Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

■ Celebrate the reunion of the Lincoln Brigade with actor/activist Richard Dreyfuss, Sunday April 27, 1:30 PM. Songs by San Francisco Mime Troupe performers. Henry Foner, MC. Tribeca Performing Arts Center, Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers St. Tickets: (212) 674-5398.

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was wrong). Or slogans that had to come out correctly down even to the right intonation when you shouted them at meetings, if you were not to excite suspicion—assuming that certain words had not shifted overnight from correct to incorrect. Until, for Gao Xingjian the writer, language itself is suspect, though this is not only because "disaster springs from the mouth," as it is said in China, but I would guess because in his highly original ink paintings (a selection of which is available in *Return to Painting*, HarperPerennial 2002, with an essay by the artist), so much is possible in the visual image alone.

"You don't understand the dangers of the written word," the nameless narrator of *One Man's Bible* is told by a prominent writer to whom he brings the manuscript of a novel. An elderly man who, looking out the window half-paralyzed with fear, tells him to "keep it for later." The narrator has seen an old woman with the placard REACTIONARY LANDOWNER'S WIFE tied with wire around her neck beaten to death in the street by teenage Red Guards. Coming home from a workplace "criticism meeting," the narrator opens his small coal stove and burns his manuscripts, diaries, books, waiting for the scorched paper to "become white ash, before shoveling it into [a] bucket," where he grinds it "to a paste." Too late, he thinks to retrieve a snapshot of his parents, between them "a skinny child...eyes...round with bewilderment as if he thought a bird would fly out of the box camera." Yet just as well, for "the way his parents were dressed they would have counted as capitalists or managerial employees of a foreign firm."

And so you define yourself by what you are not. Is that it? Someone not brave, who doesn't stick around but flees (unlike the great 1920s short-story writer Lu Xun, who sacrificed his career to politics). It's a refrain in Gao's other, more seamless novel, *Soul Mountain*, first published in 1990 in Taiwan but not in English until 2000, when he won the Nobel Prize. It is more noticeable here in the equally ambitious but now retrospectively or foreshadowingly interleaved materials of *One Man's Bible*. Not a group person, this "loner," yet "not a misanthrope"; "not polemical"—"very ordinary"; with "a smile like Buddha's, although you are not Buddha"; and "not a Superman. Since Nietzsche there has been a glut of supermen." Independence thus defined by what he is not, the narrator is divided by Gao into a present "you" investigating a past "he," this reluctant protagonist who cannot quite stay clear of the file the authorities had on his father. His own in the end.

The one who survives a doomed family. And at what cost? Who now pieces together this alternative "file," this narrative, years later, when everything, or almost everything, is different. Apparently provoked by a woman who tells him to write it all down, but he's not interested. "A wad of scrap paper," he demurs. "But Solzhenitsyn——" she says. He cuts her short, the woman in bed beside him. That's not me, he insists, and he's no historian. Do we need this old framing device to get the main story going, a hotel room in mid-1990s Hong Kong (just before Britain handed it back), a woman who remembers once, years earlier, visiting him with a friend in Beijing—and a naked girl in his apartment? It is in motion, like the memory of a March wind that takes him back to another time, when he became an enemy of the state, a breathtaking night escape, a time of extreme danger, "to tell about an individual who was contaminated by politics." And indeed, the "you" of Gao's sometimes rambling commentary that wants to cover so much thinks also to narrow the focus to some essence of this "he," "without having to discuss the sordid politics itself."

It was a time when "the imaginary world of books had become taboo" and he "couldn't find a woman." *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*—the tightly written, charming bestseller by another Chinese expatriate in France, the filmmaker Dai Sijie, about two educated city boys sent to the countryside for re-education—could not be more different from Gao's copious manner in *One Man's Bible*. If alternating chapters of past and present give way for long stretches largely to the past, as we expected, it is not before the frame encounter has almost established itself as another novel-in-progress. Talk between these two strangers, not intriguing so much as convincing, might have worked better if Gao had not made the woman a rape victim, a German Jewish survivor. In the most natural way, however, the present changes too, and though she fades from the narrative along with her questions about other women, she has crystallized this theme, almost as if it is to women that the narrator's alternation of past and present is due.

Two in particular, who leave him but through whom we understand who he is and where his real power lies. One, the married woman Lin, whom he loves, who

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warns him of a long-ago fact in his file, a gun his father had reportedly hidden. The other, Qian, whom he had known scarcely a day and a night months before, whom he writes to join him in a remote farm village where he has contrived a second, deeper retreat to escape investigation, and where, deciding his writing doesn't matter, he will settle down. In Qian, who arrives after traveling thousands of kilometers (of this poignant land Gao describes so deeply), the narrator has chosen an educated young woman rather than one of the village girls. They register their marriage at once. They have a home. At the end of a day walking with her in the mountains, he is writing at his desk when a violent scene of recrimination erupts. It is out of Hardy. We may find Qian troubled, neurotic, in this setting of practical compromises, but the young man has gotten her and himself into it. Is he using her? He tries to quiet her down. He goes to a neighbor's to get a chicken. He comes back, and she has trashed their hut. Wildly angry, she has seen what he was writing—pages of sweeping skepticism against religion and utopia—and this time, though in the fragile privacy of his hut, he is indicted head-on as a reactionary. Enraged himself, he accepts it, even that he might, as she says she fears, kill her now. The next day she is gone. Will she betray him? Was it an impossible commitment to begin with?

Women, some almost more inaccessible than memory: his mother, whose last diary is almost all he has of her, whose death at 38 at a reform-through-labor camp is elusive, indelible. Women generally at a disadvantage. In the earlier novel *Soul Mountain* we hear of a girl out in the countryside, quite inexperienced, who binged on sex at a party, and like others was executed for it. There is a lot of sex in *One Man's Bible* as well. The narrator acknowledges it, the description explicit, not fresh but practical, not especially happy, uncommitted except often to some equality of talk. Sex perhaps on everybody's mind, connected to everything in the narrator's transient existence. Unmarried, illegal sex. Not that its repression had been customarily so uncommon in China, but it was now formalized by the party, endemic in neighbors' spying.

We may wonder if in the thousands of extorted confessions of skeletons in the closet of the 1940s Mao, the icon-to-be whom the narrator condemns as a false father, was undermining the old Confucian family. Now in the bizarre egalitarianism of the 1960s it is one's "bloodline" that is scoured for rightist mistakes. The narrator must trace the incriminating pistol. His father is "overjoyed" to see him after two years; goes to the market to buy fish; is cheerful, talkative, a different person than after his wife died; cooks his son a meal, questions him about politics; and, at the climax of this scene compacting history to the humblest home and relations, the father is shattered to find out why his son has come, whose life is now threatened by "this problem." A gun "sold...to a friend," entered on a census form by his "too honest" mother, who didn't know why her husband was keeping the thing, "but I had it for protection...in those times." The son wants only to know what happened to it. From old "Uncle" Fang, hundreds of miles to the south, who had given him his gold pen when he was 8 and, like the family, thought he would be a writer, he learns that the gun was thrown into the river years ago. It will not go away.

Neither will water. Like mask, body, violence, the vulnerable land, subtle, natural touches that make an internal coherence far more authenticating than the external evidence often cited from Gao's "life" (but aren't all true novels in this inner sense autobiographical?), water is everywhere in *One Man's Bible*: It is an icy, mind-clarifying current on the narrator's bare feet (reminiscent of Chinese poetry and of *The Sun Also Rises*); it is the harbor a fugitive swam across from the mainland, submerging and breathing through straws to avoid "the searchlights of the patrol boats... [ready to] open fire"; it is the "bone-chilling river" where the narrator almost loses "the hemp bag containing the saplings he was to plant"; and another river where the narrator photographs Lin standing barefoot "with her skirt scooped up in her arms," an image strikingly like the girl toward the end of Joyce's *Portrait*, another artist exile who understood silence.

A river, too, where the mother's bloated body was found. Remembered, however (the narrator insists), as the beautiful woman of 38, to say nothing of the woman he saw naked coming out of the bathtub with soap all over her, who taught him to write with an ink brush, and who encouraged his diary-writing so that from "that time he could not stop himself writing about his dreams and self-love, sowing the seeds of future disaster."

Today the narrator writes in Chinese only because he doesn't have to look up words; language, though, lacks "refinement," and one day he will abandon it for "other media." He recalls student plays that kept his imagination alive until the theater was shut down, as were Gao's experimental,

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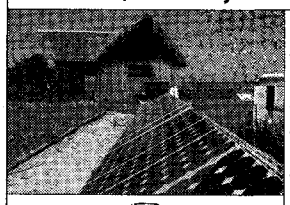
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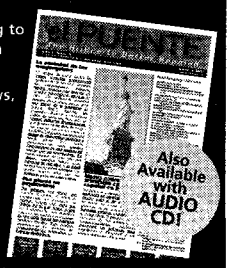

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In Memoriam
Julius Jacobson (1922-2003)

The editorial board of *New Politics* mourns the March 8 passing of Julius Jacobson, the magazine's founding and longtime editor. He will be missed by all supporters of the democratic socialist left. A memorial will be held on Sunday, April 27th, 12:00 noon at the Cantor Film Center, 36 East 8 Street, New York, N.Y. Memorial donations in Julius Jacobson's name may be sent to *New Politics*, PO Box 98, Brooklyn, NY 11231.

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sometimes "absurdist" plays, banned in China since *The Other Shore* (1986), which typically welcomes all the actor's performing skills, not only speech, to its theme of lost self.

In *Soul Mountain* an old man recalls ink-wash paintings destroyed by the authorities. Art and politics. The subject is not closed, no matter what Gao insists in *One Man's* (but much more than one man's) *Bible*. But it is a personal history we ponder, contemplating the cover, a painting by the author, a haunting, fluid, evidently female shape.

One forgives Gao his misunderstanding of that great questioner and liberator Nietzsche, whose "superman" can relive his life, to say nothing of the genealogies that, traced by Gao back through his reimagined China, illuminate a will to power all his own. ■

FILMS

Death in Helsinki

STUART KLAWANS

THE MAN WITHOUT A PAST • STEVIE • DREAMCATCHER • THE GUYS

OK, let's say that life goes on. That's what the authors of Ecclesiastes and *Murphy* thought: "The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new." And Aki Kaurismäki seems to think so, too, in *The Man Without a Past*, a gentle, wistful comedy about being bludgeoned to death, then building a satisfying new existence for yourself in an abandoned shipping container.

Shot in both sound and color—elements that should not be taken for granted when Kaurismäki is behind the camera—*The Man Without a Past* reveals how rich the world can be, even when the screen-jolting red pours from your skull, even when the soundtrack's orchestral harmonies swell from a boom box that was wrested from you in the park, then turned up to cover the thuds of your mugging. If you're like the title character (Markku Peltola), you die soon after the attack. Or else you don't: You jerk upright in a hospital bed, stagger to the mirror (where you see yourself bandaged like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man*) and then wander blindly to Helsinki's waterfront, where squatters rescue your paperless, penniless, amnesiac body.

For moviegoers who know Kaurismäki's work, what follows will fall into the category of the nothing new. So much the better. Each motif is as welcome as sunshine: the Finnish "rhythm music" (performed here by a Salvation Army band); the dust-mop dog (played by the suggestively named Tähti); the principal set, which resembles a 1950s cocktail lounge assembled from a junkyard; and the deadpan sarcasm against capitalists and cops, who at one point arrest our hero for the crime of having witnessed a holdup at a defunct bank. Most familiar of all in the Kaurismäkian scheme, and most welcome, is the romance between the hero and Irma, a Salvation Army foot soldier. Played with endlessly touching minimalism by Kati Outinen (*The Match Factory Girl*), Irma conducts her love affair by means of pauses, silences, blinks, stares, the mute proffering of various hand-held objects and a millimeter's worth of a smile.

Although the movie incorporates a resurrection and the Salvation Army, God does not make an appearance. The film's nearest approximation to a redeemer is a lawyer in a cheap suit, who talks as if his mouth were full of mashed potatoes but still gets the hero out of jail. Brains and persistence can pay off, sometimes, among people who are damaged. So can a sense of community, which our hero helps foster in this landscape that ought to look bleak, with its leftover metal and industrious water, but instead shines like a pastel postcard. And forgiveness pays off, too, up to a point. Our hero likes to pull silently on his cigarette and gaze into the middle distance, like most Kaurismäki protagonists, as his way of letting sinners pass. Even so, he's willing to see justice done to the men who beat in his head. He's not a wimp; Markku Peltola looks like a cross between Sami Frey and Frankenstein's monster.

How little this man needs to be happy! A worker in Basra might get by with no more. And how he aches—how Irma aches, too—when what little he's got might be taken away!

A timeless subject, yet one that somehow seems of the moment.

I've been reading a new book about Abbas Kiarostami, written by Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa and Jonathan Rosenbaum, and admiring in particular the latter's thoughts about the politics of image-gathering. As Rosenbaum notes, all of Kiarostami's mature films present us with encounters between a relatively affluent, sophisticated character and people who have significantly less money, education and power. The privileged one pumps the others for information about themselves, while offering little or nothing personal in return. Often this collector of lives is a filmmaker. Sometimes, in a gesture of explicit self-questioning, the figure is Kiarostami himself.

These reflections, too, seem of the moment, since Steve James's new documentary, *Stevie*, deals with them in depth.

You may recall that James's best-known film to date, *Hoop Dreams* (made with Frederick Marx and Peter Gilbert), was made in fly-on-the-wall style. Except for the stunning moment when a subject rounded on the camera and demanded, "Do you ever wonder how I live?" the filmmakers in *Hoop Dreams* were an invisible, unacknowledged presence. This mode of documentary contrasts with other familiar approaches, from the voice-of-God method (so easily parodied, yet so enduring) to the performance-art techniques of Nick Broomfield, Michael Moore and Judith Helfand, who play semi-comic characters within their films. In *Stevie*, it's James's turn to become an on-screen presence, though one without any playful qualities. He's here, with full awareness of his class privileges, to intervene in the life of the poor man he's filming.

That man is Stephen Dale Fielding, who grew up in the rolling hills and quasi-Southern atmosphere of downstate Illinois. Long ago, when James attended graduate school in that area, he signed up to be a Big Brother to Stevie, who was then 11 years old and already out of control. As James admits on the soundtrack, he felt relieved when the time came to pack up for Chicago and he could leave Stevie behind. But James also felt guilty to feel so relieved. In 1997, after an absence of a dozen years, he came back to make a film about Stevie, a film that was somehow supposed to set their lives straight.

Stevie is as much a mirror of James—the classic guilt-ridden left-liberal, dwelling in the lower reaches of the upper middle class—as it is a portrait of Fielding, the classic trailer-park ne'er-do-well with the

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chaotic family, fondness for booze and dope, and aversion to steady work. The strength of *Stevie* is that, in its deliberately artless and earnest way, it confronts these stereotypes on their own firm ground. The film takes a hard look at the ineffectualness of the many fine people, James included, who did what they could for Stevie and then moved on. At the same time, the film stares unflinchingly at Stevie himself, a bespectacled, ungainly goof with loose wet lips and lanky blond hair, who at the start of the main production was once more in jail, this time on charges of having sexually molested his 8-year-old cousin.

Was the charge valid? Evidently. And Stevie fit the profile. Behind that half-dumb, half-angry smile lay his own childhood history of abandonment, beating, institutionalization and rape.

What you see, then, is the true story of how James interceded with Stevie's family, his girlfriend, his lawyers—even with the local head of the Aryan Brotherhood, who claimed he would put in a phone call to Stevie's fellow inmates, to dissuade them from killing him. You also see how Stevie slowly pissed away his last chance to get help and live outside. The filming (or should I call it the rescue operation?) went on for something like two years, and nothing good came of it, for anyone.

Does anything good come of it for you, the viewer? I'd say that *Stevie* has two things to offer. The first is a test case in documentary methods—an exercise, you might say, in creating the anti–Fred Wiseman film, in which the filmmaker stands in plain sight and the helping professions all fail. The second thing *Stevie* offers is a reality check, delivered with all appropriate bluntness.

This, unfortunately, is the life that goes on.

Short Takes: Mr. Bush announced that diplomacy had failed (without its actually being tried) on the same day that I saw *Dreamcatcher*. Dazed and sickened at the prospect of imminent war, I had found myself with nothing to watch but a lousy movie by Lawrence Kasdan and William Goldman. But then, I repeat myself. Contemptuous of their audience yet willing to pander to it, contemptuous of old movie conventions yet unable to think outside their terms, Kasdan and Goldman have patched together an alien-invasion, childhood-buddies, lost-in-the-woods, women-are-dirt picture, which will stick in my mind only because of its scene of a bombing mission. Army helicopters, led by Morgan Freeman, race toward the site in Maine where bellicose, viruslike aliens have landed. By means of mental telepathy, the aliens send children's voices into the heads of the Army pilots: "Please don't hurt us. We're helpless. There is no infection. Don't hurt us." But Freeman knows it's a trick, just like those pictures of suffering Iraqi children that credulous journalists circulate. He fires the missiles, and the Maine woods go up like Baghdad.

Later in the movie, of course, it turns out that Freeman is as loony as General Jack D. Ripper. Like the second thoughts of a servile news establishment, this is too little, too late.

The first bombs struck Baghdad on the night I saw *The Guys*, Jim Simpson's film version of the post-9/11 play by Anne Nelson. Out in the real world the United States was attempting to assassinate Saddam Hussein by means of a cruise missile—evidence, I would say, that Mr. Bush had been dwelling in a fantasy of omnipotence, from which he was about to be torn. Onscreen were the more-or-less true stories of some New York City firefighters, mixed with images of their still-grieving, real-life colleagues—evidence of the vulnerability of these Americans, and of the fantasy that their lives might somehow be mended.

The fantasy: A fire captain in Brooklyn (Anthony LaPaglia) must deliver eulogies for eight men lost at the World Trade Center. He turns for advice to a Manhattan journalist (Sigourney Weaver), who is deeply moved to learn that she can help. She is worthy. She, too, is allowed to grieve (although she lost no one in the attack) and deserves the professional respect of a quiet, strong man.

Which is the problem with *The Guys*. As writing, it's a literary analgesic, administered to the character who suffers from nothing worse than a headache. And this misdirected solicitude carries over to the filmmaking. LaPaglia, who is always good, is rock-solid as the fire captain; but the primary focus is given to Weaver, who usually is good but this time keeps pulling back her lips, the better to look stricken, and speaks her lines with the stilted clarity of a stage actress addressing Row Z.

With all respect to Anne Nelson—an honorable person, who based this play on a real experience—I think she needs to watch *Stevie*.

A Personal Note: Readers who may have enjoyed this column over the years should know that they have owed much of their pleasure to its editor, Art Winslow. His quiet, sometimes amused support has sustained not only me but also a great many other writers from all over the country. With regret, I note that this is my last piece for Art, who is leaving *The Nation*. May he depart for revels yet unimagined. ■

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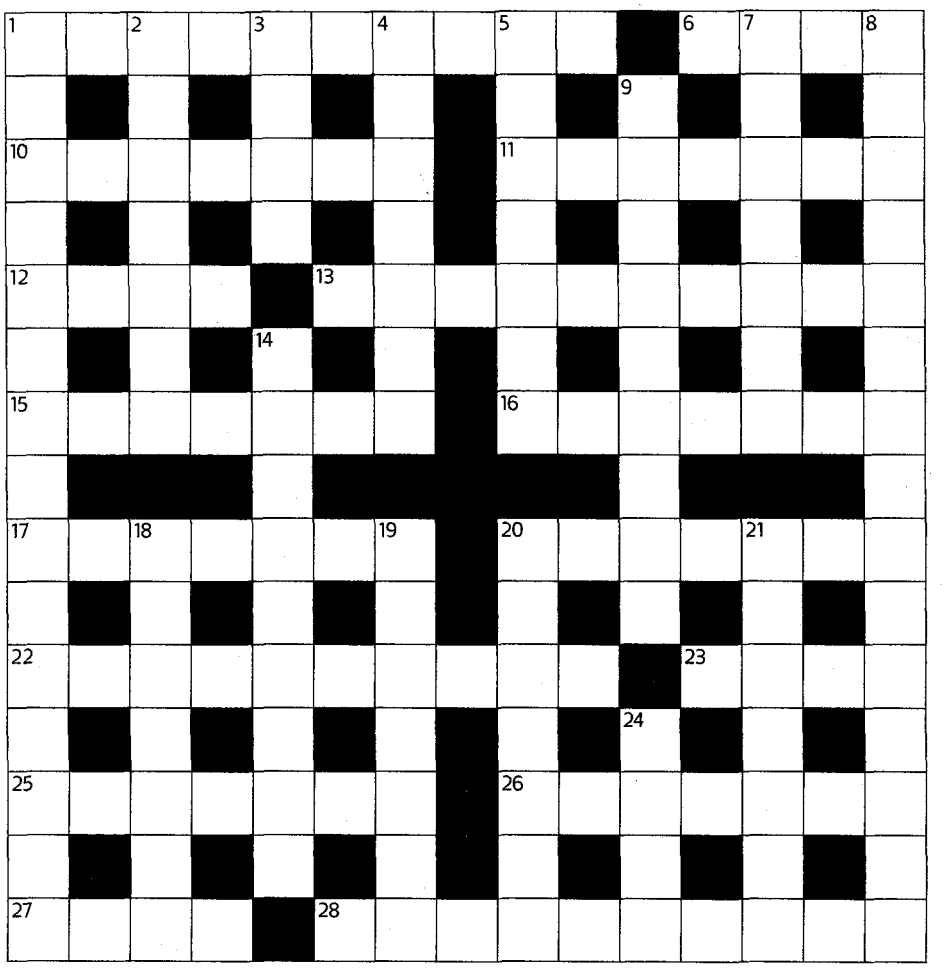

ACROSS

1 One may experiment with them, using page 1, possibly. (6,4)

6 Trade this for what the dog has, coming back. (4)

10 Composer of the vivid sort, when Mr. Jolson is involved with it. (7)

11 One little line over another might represent it, being the same as this. (5,2)

12 Keep this for remembrance, which the Japanese might keep in the cupboard. (4)

13 It starts out all right, to have a sort of keen foe standing for the English inside, but you could get swamped with it! (10)

15 The way the Scotsman says "No, come out in force!"—with his usual twang. (7)

16 The purpose in what you may pay for housing is to match what you wear. (7)

17 Tom's apt to make this important on the old ship. (7)

20 Elsie was once from here, but more recently a person in the White House. (7)

22 Possibly a need drove this, showing how one made a supreme effort. (10)

23 A political group that didn't quite make a stumbling point of it. (4)

25 Little Leo grew up to be a King on the screen. (4,3)

26 The way around in what might lead to boredom. (7)

27 and **28** Spread at the top of your head, but a grade of E is wrong for the rest, possibly! (4,2,4,4)

DOWN

1 Fires one (if it's pink?) and makes an escape. (5,3,3,4)

2 Tangled vines are all right inside, but that's the way one petitions for help! (7)

3 Possibly sell more than one measure of these. (4)

4 Sort of lick the contents, and nose around it—but you might get stuck with such things! (7)

5 What the errand boy does, and evidently enjoys the result. (4,3)

7 You have a way with this to fly a kite that's lost its crosspiece, like the guy who may have wanted to be President. (7)

8 The people who walked in favor of examinations? Or were they just against something? (7,8)

9 You might find a spike if you do this where you travel. (9)

14 Bridge may warn you what it is, but they may hope to get rid of things with this on sale. (9)

18 What the note-takers get shows how the stretcher works. (4,3)

19 People sometimes go out of the way to look for it—the sort of rot that could be blue, finally. (7)

20 London greeting that reminds one of what was heard at the game with 10, as it appears. (7)

21 Where one who was known as quite a gal has a row, which is more sailor-like. (7)

24 Not very polite, but one hears someone is sorry when he did. (4)

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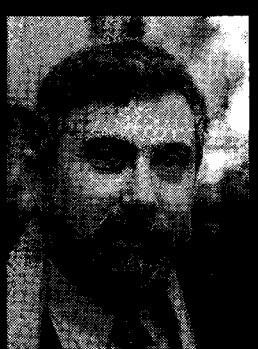

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